BIRDS OF KASHMIR

BY
SAMSAR CHAND KOUL,
World Watcher

SRINAGAR
THE NORMAL PRES
19

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Second Edition

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The demand for books on nature is on the increase. Bird's brilliant plumage and their celestial songs charm lovers of Nature. Educationists increasingly insist on their juvenile wards' taking active interest in Nature lore. Armed with these live facts, I was able to persuade the publishers to bring out a second edition of this book.

I should like to express my indebtedness for producing this edition to late Col. Phillips and Shri Mohan Lal Raina, the artist for new illustrations, to Shree Dina Nath Dhar, the proprietor of the Normal Press for the publication of this edition.

Eleven more bird pictures and a chapter on migration of birds have been added.

Motiyar, Rainawari
SRINAGAR, KASHMIR
Jan., 1956

S. C. KOUL

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

[illegible] ... is on the increase. [illegible] ... calm Power of Nature ... [illegible] taking active ... [illegible] I was able to ... [illegible] of the Birds.

[illegible] ... Wharton and ... Dunn ... [illegible] ... the [illegible] ... of the ...

[illegible] ... migration of birds.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Kashmir the home of Kashyp Reshi is the largest valley in the lap of the Himaláyas The highest peak on the east is Mahádiv (13,003 ft), on the north Harmoukh (16,447 ft.) and along the south and south-west runs the flat-topped Pantsál Range.

Nestling among the surrounding mountains are glorious side-valleys, like Purmandal and Gosai which are a paradise for the botanist. The high altitude lakes like Gangabal and Koñsar Nág (Vishna Pad) encircled by awe-inspiring glaciers and snow-fields present an entrancing spectacle to the onlooker. The geologist will find rich material for investigation in the fossils. At the dawn of a summer day the music from the feathered world is full of rapture.

The valley occupies a central position in Asia. Hence we find there a good many birds during their migration in spring and autumn. The healthy hobby of bird observation should form the natural pastime of everyone in the valley.

Lt. Col. G. B. Sanford in his introduction to my unpublished notes on some birds of Kashmir writes:–

"The real value and purpose of introducing this particular line of Natural History to the boys is a deeper one than that of its own attractiveness. Birds are a delightful hobby for their own sake and well worth a place among the recognized pursuits of school boys alone for the charm and interest with which nature has endowed them..................

The by-products of field ornithology are invaluable in the education of boys and are more than ample justification for its inclusion in their curriculum. It lacks nothing in the matter of contributing to the physical health, strength and development: for to pursue it keenly and thoroughly in a country like Kashmir entails upon its devotee all the activities of stalking in plains and hills, of cross-country work on foot, and of the minor exertions of mountaineering.

To some extent also it gives them that invaluable ability known as 'an eye for the country'."

This little book aims at introducing the beginner in birdcraft to his feathered friends. It will help him to derive pleasure from noticing their charming plumage, attractive movements, and not the least their song. I have inserted in the book some of the native folklore and a few observations made during the boys' excursions to the haunts of the birds.

The Revd. Canon C. E. Tyndale-Biscoe, the pioneer of education in Kashmir, used in the days of his active service to lead parties of boys over the mountains and through the valleys and thus incul-

cated a love of nature in them. These outings have been continued up to the present by worthy educationists, The Revd. F. E. Lucey, The Revd. & Mrs. Dugdale. The Revd. R. D. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. E. D. Tyndale-Biscoe and Mr. F. Jacob. We have thus been able to find out the summer haunts of migratory birds in the various parts of the valleys visited by us from time to time.

These side-valleys, especially where the deciduous belt meets the coniferous, provide a suitable habitat for bird life, and here one can learn much by patient and persevering observation.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. B. B. Osmaston and Lt. Col. G. B. Sanford, who took me out with them into the country and taught me how and what to observe.

I must also express my deep sense of gratitude to the following gentlemen who have helped me in various ways in producing this book.

To Mr. K. J. Hopman for the illustrations of the Golden Oriole the Paradise Flycatcher, the Bulbul and the Shrike (some material was supplied to him from the School Museum).

To the School Drawing Master for copying three illustrations (the King-fisher, the Bee-eater, and the Hoopoe) from the sketches of Mr. E. D. Tyndale-Biscoe and those of another friend of mine.

To Mr. F. Jacob M. A. (Cantab) M. R. S. T. (London) for very kindly correcting the manuscript and proof sheets at great personal, inconvenience.

To Mr. Govind Koul for patiently and laboriously typing the manuscript sheets.

To the Headmaster Mr. Shanker Koul, B. A., M. R. S. T. (London) and my friend Mr. Shrider Koul, B. A. B. T. Headmaster Government High School Sopore for valuable suggestions.

The information given in this book about the colours of the iris, beak, and legs of some of the birds has been obtained from "Whistler's Popular Handbook on Indian Birds" and the measurement of eggs from "Osmaston's Notes on Kashmir birds".

To these famous ornithologists I am most grateful.

C. M. S. High School,
SRINAGAR,
KASHMIR.

SAMSAR CHAND KOUL

Dec. 1938

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Beautiful valleys of Kashmir.

Containing a description of the beautiful flowers, the attractive birds, romantic lakes, enchanting glacieres of high valleys, and Indigenious use of herbs and the folklore connected with them.

Some press notes.

A great delightful book... ....."a possession for ever"......because it is full of so many beautiful things."

Lord Bishop of Lahore

'The author is lyrical ..obviously very knowledgeable .....It contains excellant photographs and coloured plates of Kashmir flowers.......

The Statesmen.

Srinagar and its Environs.

Containing an account of seasonal beauty, interesting sites, boat trips, mountain climbs, flowers and birds.

Gulmarg and its Environs.

Containing an account of birds, flowers, picnic nooks and rambles round the place.

The Mysterious Cave of Amar Nath, in English and in Hindi.
The Mysterious Spring of Khirbhawani
Pahalgam and its Environs.

FOREWORD

It gives me pleasure to write a foreword to Mr. Samsar Chand Koul's little book on Kashmir Birds not because he is an old pupil of mine or because he is one of our School Staff who is interested in bird life, but because he is unselfish, and always wishes others to share his love for knowledge of birds. So it has been his delight for many years to take boys with him on his excursions on lake and mountain to teach them to love birds and look upon them as their friends, and this love and interest has induced them to show their sorrow for caged birds and set them free, and ever be bird friends and deliverers.

CECIL E. TYNDALE-BISCOE

Dec. 27, 1938



Female Male

PARADISE FLYCATCHER
(*Fhambaseer*)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

Order——Passeres

Family——Corvidae (The Crow family)

CHAPTER II

Family——Paridae (The Tit family)

CHAPTER III

Family——Timaliidae (The Babbler family)

CHAPTER IV

Family——Pycnonotidae (The Bulbul family)

CHAPTER V

Family——Certhiidae (The Creeper family)

CHAPTER VI

Family——Turdidae (The Thrush family).

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAGE

Order———Coccyges.

Fmily——Cuculidae (The Cuckoo family).

CHAPTER XXV.

Order———Psittaci.

Family——psittacidae (The Parrot Family).

CHAPTER XXVI.

Order———Striges.

Family——Strigidae (The Owl family).

CHAPTER XXVII.

Order———Accipitres.

Family——Pandionidae (The Osprey family).

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Family——Gypidae (The Vulture family).

CHAPTER XXIX.

Family——Falconidae (The Falcon family).

CHAPTER XXX.

Order———Columbae

Family——Columbidae (The Dove Family).

CHAPTER XXXI.

Order———Grallinae.

Family——Phasianidae (The Chikor family)

CHAPTER XXXII.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CHAPTER XXXVI

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

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CHAPTER I

Order———Passeres

The Crow Family (Corvidae)

THE RAVEN

(Corvus corax tibetanus)

Local names: (Boṭiñ Kāv) *in Kashmir proper*

(Khata) *in Leh*

A RARE MIGRANT

The raven is a rare migrant rather larger than the jungle crow. It has a black coat, a massive head, and a beak with bristles round the nostrils. It is a rare visitor to the valley. It is fairly common in the dry, rocky country of Ladakh at a height of 10,000 to 16,000 ft. They are usually seen near villages, but are also found far from human habitation. Near Leh they can be seen busily feeding in the corn fields. They eat grain as well as flesh.

They commence nest building about the middle of February. These are usually placed on high cliffs well out of reach. B. B. Osmaston, Esq. found a nest near the Tsokar Lake (15,000 ft.) which was composed of sticks, thickly lined with yak's hair.

The eggs are of bluish colour marked with sepia and grey. They are a rather broad oval.

In Ladakh the 'caw' on the roof of a house is supposed to forebode evil. "In Denmark its appearance in a village is held to portend the death of the priest, in Andalusia its croaking over a house foretells an unlucky day and if three times repeated, a fatality". —*Swainson.*

Kaka Bhasond in the Hindu mythology is the Raven who acquired the knowlege of Self-Realisation in company of Hermits. He is supposed to change his form at his will and adopt himself according the conditions of various Age periods.

"In Christian art the Raven is connected with several saints. St. Benediet had a tame one which, at his command carried away a poisoned loaf, sent to him by a wicked priest, and placed it beyond the reach of any living creature."

"Half a loaf of bread was brought daily to Paul the Hermit in his cave except on the day on which he was visited by St. Antony when sagacious bird brought a whole loaf. The murdered body of St. Vincent, thrown to the wild beasts, was defended by a Raven."

"The great age to which Ravens live is proverbial and was reckoned by ancients as being twenty-seven times that of a man."

THE JUNGLE CROW

(Corvus macrorhynchos intermedius)

Kashmiri names (Diva Kāv, Pantsöl Kāv)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The jungle crow is rather larger than the house crow. It has an entirely black uniform and its caw is hoarse. The bill and legs are black. It is found along the whole length of the Himalayas from Afghanistan to Bhutan. It begins to migrate to the valley proper during the last week of October when finding difficulty in getting food on the "Margs", and it leaves the valley in the beginning of May as soon as the meadows become clear of snow.

In winter we see them in driving snow, sitting on trees near houses, solemnly on the watch in the hope of getting something from the inmates of the house. They eat everything that comes in their way.

In summer they can be seen above the tree limits, at an elevation of about 12,000 ft. We have seen several pairs at Kolahoi (11,000 ft.) and Ledwás (12,000 ft.). At Gosai (10,000 ft.) we found a crow right inside a dense thicket, probably searching for the eggs of a bunting.

It is said that when Alexander the Great obtained the immortal water from the Realm of Darkness, he placed the water-bottle on a pine tree. To his great consternation

a crow dislodged it and quenched its thirst. Hence it is said, that after death its beak does not rot and the pine never loses its greenness.

They build large nests of sticks in trees from 20 ft. to 40 ft. up. These are lined with a thick layer of wool and hair. The clutch consists of either 4 or 5 eggs.

They measure 42·5 × 29·7 mm.

THE HOUSE CROW

(Corvus splendens zugmayeri)

Kashmiri name: (Kāv)

Vernacular name: Kawà

A RESIDENT BIRD

This crow is confined to the town. In colour it is glossy black, with a grey head and upper breast. This species is found in Sind, North-Western Punjab, the Mekran coast and South-eastern Persia.

It is a strong and intelligent bird. Its cleverness and intelligence outweigh its thievish propensíties. The power of mutual co-operation is highly developed among them. I was sitting once in school library when from outside there came the strident noise of cawing. I came out and saw a crow entangled in a piece of thread, high up in a mulberry tree. A boy climbed up and released it and immediately the noise stopped. For bad behaviour they have been known to peck the offender to death.

I have seen several of their tricks which merit admiration. On one occasion I was watching the nest of a crow with a friend of mine. It was on a kikar (acacia) tree. I saw the bird fly down from its nest and peck the head of a woman who was walking below. I was surprised and asked my friend if he could explain it. He told me that she had partly dismantled the nest and every time she went out of her house, the crow had pounced upon her. It could recognize her out of a dozen women. It became such a nuisance that she was on the point of leaving her home and living somewhere else. I learnt subsequently that the tree had been cut

down and the poor women saved from her worry.

The day of the full moon in February is dedicated to the crow and boys make a contrivance of a long and a short stick, and place cooked rice on it and throw it to the crows, reciting the following verse:

"Kāv Baṭa Kawo! Khetsare Kawo!
Kāv tah Kāviñ suti-hyet
Gāngābala shrānā karit, gurche
Metse tiokā karit, wollabā
kāwo! sāne nāwe lare kanadāre
Ware bata kheh."

(Oh crow! Together with your consort, having bathed in Gangabal lakes and marked yourself with yellow earth, come, sit on the eaves of our new building and eat cooked rice.)

This bird is entirely omnivorous; it will eat any thing that a man will, and many other things that he refuses to touch.

In August 1928 an epidemic broke out among the birds Ever since their number is dwindling year by year. We do not find them now in flocks round houses during winter months.

The breeding season lasts from June to the middle of July.

The nest is a large, untidy mass of sticks, lined with smaller ones, or any soft material, placed in the fork of a willow, mulberry or poplar tree.

The clutch consists of either 4 or 5 eggs which vary considerably in size and colour. The ground colour is various shades of blue and green speckled with dull reddish brown. They measure 39·0 × 26·6 mm.

Cawing at the window is supposed to bring bad luck. The house crow's hearing is very acute, which has given rise to the idiom, Kāva kan (crow's ears), Kāva gātul (crow wise).

THE JACKDAW

(Corvus monedula soemmeringii)

Kashmiri name: (Kāviñ)

A RESIDENT BIRD

There is a common belief that the jackdaw is the female crow. Grammatically speaking Kāviñ is the feminine of Kàv (Crow), and Kaviñ is also used for jackdaw, hence the mistake. Dr. William Turner in 1544 wrote that it was named Monedula by the Latins, as though from Monetula, the Moneta or money, which according to Pliny is stolen by no other bird.

The jackdaw is slightly smaller than the house crow, and the whole of its back, wings and tail are glossy black; it has a grey collar; its chin, throat and upper part of the neck are black; the eye is white.

This species breeds from Eastern Russia and Macedonia to the Yenisei River and South to Persia and Afghanistan. In winter many migrate to the provinces west of the Indus and to the Punjab districts along the base of N. W. Himalayas. It is a very common bird in Kashmir and is found in the side valleys to a height of about 7,000 ft. but is not common outside the main valley. In winter thousands can be seen in enormous flocks on mulberry and chenar trees. When on the wing they resemble a huge black cloud. Their manoeuvring feats, changing direction, swooping down, or soaring high, present one of the most interesting sights of bird-life. After sunset they go to swamps where they make a deafening noise.

They select as nesting sites holes in chenars and willows or walls, mosque turrets and crevices of houses. They build nests in April and eggs are laid in the first week of May. The nests are made of sticks lined with wool and hair. The eggs are 4 to 6 in number; the ground colour is pale greenish blue speckled and spotted with deep blackish brown. They measure 30·1 × 24·8 mm.

When children see flocks of jackdaws flying at sunset

they cry aloud:—

Kàva yeniwol muràdun môl
tse ti baṭa ṭok, me ti baṭa ṭok,
dehamnai rashan kaḍai mula tsog.

"The wedding party of crows, the father of Muràd a dish of cooked rice to you, a dish of cooked rice to me, if you do not give me a little gravy, I shall uproot your pigtail".

THE RED-BILLED CHOUGH

(Pyrrhocoax Pyrrhocoax)

Kashmiri name: (Wan Kaviñ)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Red-billed chough is as large as a jackdaw, and has a red curved beak, red legs and a black body.

They are gregarious and in summer are found at all elevations between 10,000 ft. and 17,000 ft We found them at Sekivas (11,000 ft.), Suru (10 000 ft), Apharwat (13,000 ft.), Gangabal (12,000 ft.), Tosa Maidan (11,000 ft) and Konsar Nàg (12,120 ft.).

Mr. Bullock Workman found a chough on the ice plateau (19,000 ft.) of Nun Khun (24,600 ft).

In winter when snow is deep on the ground several pairs can often be seen feeding with jackdaws and crows along the Gupkar slope of the Shankaràchàr in Srinagar.

"When tame it shows a very inquisitive disposition examining every novelty with the greatest attention." —*Wood*.

The nests are placed on high cliffs away from human habitation They are made of wool and hair, sometimes with and sometimes without sticks. The eggs are laid in May and a clutch consists of either 3 or 4 eggs. They are whitish in ground colour, marked all over with yellowish brown and grey. They measure 39·2×27·6 mm. Some peasants believe that the flesh of this bird cures rheumatism.

THE YELLOW--BILLED MAGPIE

(Urocissa flavirostris cucullata)

Kashmiri name: (Löṭ Ràza in Lolàb)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird has a tail of about 18 inches in length. The head, neck and breast are black, the under parts white and the upper plumage purplish blue, while during flight the tail appears like a beautiful fan, broadly tipped with white. The eyes are bright yellow, the bill waxen yellow, and the legs a bright orange yellow. It is found in the western Himalayas breeding at a height of 5,000 to 10,000 ft.

The Yellow-billed Magpie is a common bird in the Lolàb Valley, where it is found in the deodar and blue pine forests. They fly in pairs or in small parties and make a great deal of noise, though they sometimes utter a sweet note. They come to the ground to feed, and raise their tails as they hop.

Their food consists of insects, fruit and the eggs and young of other birds.

The breeding season is in May. The nest is rather small, cup shaped, and made of short, thin sticks lined with roots. The clutch consists of either 3 or 4 eggs of a pale yellow colour. with streaks of various shades of brown.

THE KASHMIR MAGPIE

(Pica pica)

Kashmiri name: (Hor Káv)

SUMMER MIGRANT

The bird is comparatively larger than a Myna. It has a white back, black wings, a black bar on white head, and white underparts.

"Generally distributed throughout Europe and Northern Asia to China, and also occuring over the greater part of Northern America."

On August 10, 1953 two pairs were observed in the compound of the old palace at Gulmarg. They alighted from silver firs to feed on the ground. Next day we found a flock of these birds making a noise among silver firs towards the Ningal forest (10,000 ft.).

Col. Ward in 1903 records it from Sind Valley. The bird we observed on August 1, 1926 round Suru (Baltistan) had a longer tail.

In South Germany the shrieking of a Magpie near a dwelling fortells either disharmony in the house-hold or the arrival of an unwelcome visitor, but a lively chatter presages the advent of a friend. *—Lewis R. W. Loyd.*

Thiselton Dyer claims a strange belief for Devonshire in which county he says, the peasant on seeing a single Magpie, spits over his right shoulder three times saying:

Clean birds by sevens,
Unclean by twos;
The Dove in the heavens,
Is the one I choose.

"To avert evil from Magpies a very general custom is to take off the hat and bow to the bird."

—Loyd.

CHAPTER II

The Tit Family (Paridae)

THE GREY TIT

(Parus major kashmiriensis)

Kashmiri name: (Ranga Tsar)

A RESIDENT BIRD

The Grey Tit is a common bird, as large as a sparrow. It has a bluish-grey back, white cheeks, whitish under-parts, with a black head, and a black bar running down the middle of its abdomen. When flying two white bars are seen in its tail. This species is found in the Western Himalayas as as far as Garwal.

They are active little birds and hunt for insects along branches of trees. They go downwards head first when seeking insects, and strike the bark with their beaks like a wood-pecker.

"Tits are excessively bold and even ferocious, the larger ones occasionally destroying young and sickly birds, both in the wild state and in confinement". *Jerdon.*

In spring the note resembles the creaking of a spinning wheel. The breeding season commences early in May. A common site for the nest is a deserted nest hole of the small Blue Kingfisher. They also build in holes in trees. The nest is the usual pad of hair and 6 to 9 eggs are laid. They measure 17·5 × 13·4mm.

THE CRESTED BLACK TIT

(Lophophanes melanolophus)

Kashmiri name: (Piñtsakön)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Crested Black Tit is a little smaller than a sparrow. It has an erect crest and white patches on the

nape and sides of the face. The lower plumage from the breast downwards is iron-grey, the iris is brown, the bill black, the legs dark bluish grey. It is found from Kohat and Chitral along the Himalayas to Garwal and Naini Tal.

In summer they are very common in the pine and fir forests on the hills from about 6,500 ft. to 11,000 ft. and their call may be heard amongst these trees. They hunt for insects in company with other small birds. In November we often see them in the gardens around Srinagar and Hari Parbat on quince, pomegranate and almond trees, busily hunting insects and uttering their call "*Tseek, tseek tseek*".

"The Crested Black Tit is seldom seen at rest but when the first stirrings of the spring turn his thoughts towards a mate, he occasionally ceases from the hunt for food and betaking himself to some lofty twig he perches there and proclaims his ardour to the world a loud clear call, "*want you, need you, want you, need you*" sentiment that frequently finds an echo in the human heart below". —*Whistler*.

They breed in holes in trees in May and June, generally in fir forests, the nest being the usual pad of wool and hair on a layer of moss. The clutch consists of either 5 or 6 eggs which are white, richly marked with chestnut. They measure 15·8×11·5 mm.

CHAPTER III

The Babbler Family (Timaliidae)

THE STREAKED LAUGHING-THRUSH

(Trochalopterum lineatum lineatum)

Kashmiri name: (Sheena-pi-piñ) *The Snow Whistle*

Vernacular name: (Sath Bhai)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Streaked Laughing Thrush is nearly as large as a myna. It is a garden bird, generally found moving jerkily among the low bushes. It appears dark brown at a distance but there are some rufous streaks on the wings and throat.

This well known bird extends through the Punjab Himalayas to Garwal and Kumaon. It is often seen in winter, hopping from bush to bush, one following another from tree to tree. Sometimes the tail is raised and sometimes lowered.

In winter when the snow is falling fast and the cold is intense its sweet call "*sheen-a-pae-pae*" (oh, snow, fall, fall) is most enchanting. Its other call "*vieew, vieew*", "*such a vieew*", is no less musical.

They migrate in the first week of November, and retire late in May to the side valleys to breed. We saw several pairs at Zaiwan (11,000 ft.), Ferozepor nala and Ramban.

It is said that once upon a time the bird lost its brother in the falling snow, and now it comes every year and especially delights in falling snow, in order to search for the missing one. It is the forerunner of snow.

Breeding commences in June. The nests are placed in low bushes or in the grass on steep banks. 3 eggs of a greenish blue colour are generally laid. They measure 25·8×18·8 mm.

CHAPTER IV

The Bulbul Family (Pycnonotidae)

THE WHITE-CHEEKED BULBUL

(Molpastes leucogenys leucogenys)

Kashmiri name: (Bill-bi-chur)

A RESIDENT BIRD

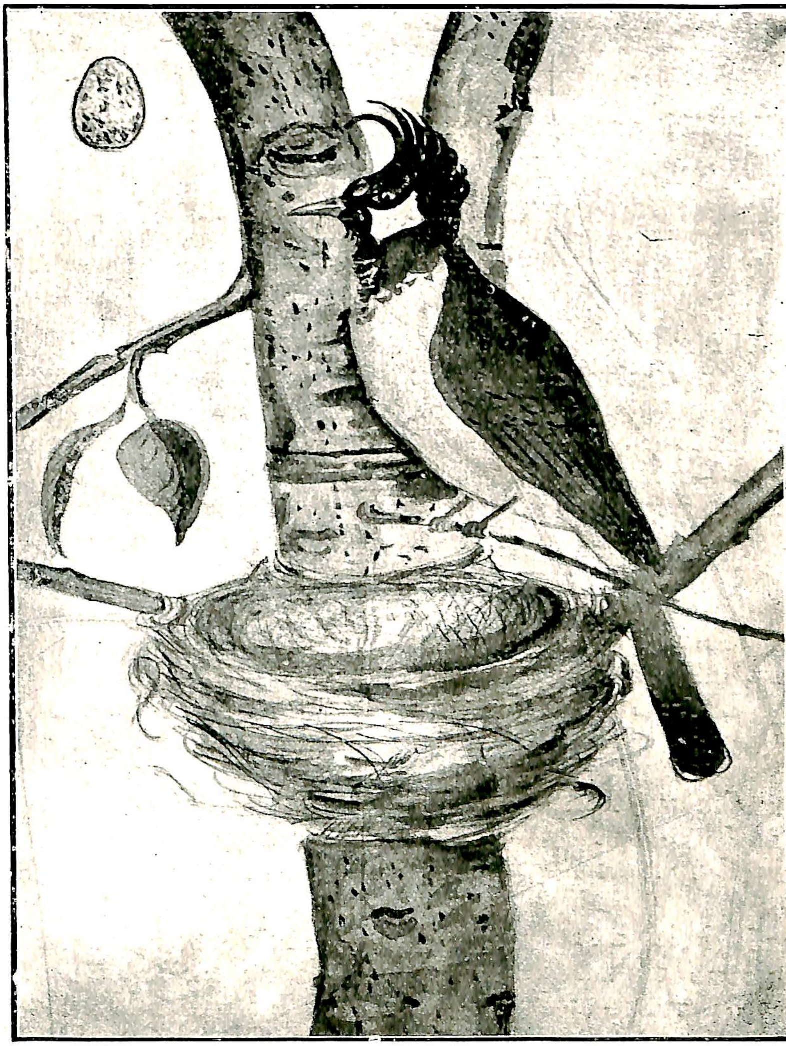
This bird has a conspicuous bent forward crest. The chin, throat and portions of the side of the neck are black, and there is a large white patch on the face. The rump is yellow, the iris brown, the bill and legs black.

It extends throughout the Himálayas to the hills of Assam, north of the Brahmaputra river and throughout Central India. Outside India it is found as far west as Mesopotamia. Poets have often sung its praises and frequent references have been made to it by the Persian. It is supposed to be a bringer of good fortune. Its movements, gestures and sweet twitter are much appreciated by everyone. Quite unmindful of the severity of the winter, a pair will sit on a window sill within a hand's breadth of each other, and then move closer and closer to show an example of pure love.

They enter fearlessly into the room and eat the grains or nut-kernels offered. They would even take raisins from the hand of one of my friends.

They feed chiefly on insects and fruit, and are often seen on the ground collecting ants, grubs, beetles and the like, and in the evening they run after insects like a flycatcher.

They are reputed to have given to Soloman the power to differentiate between an artificial and a natural nosegay, and to be ready to offer advice if one has the ear willing to listen, Their warbling at the window signifies the advent of a guest.



THE WHITE-CHEECKED BULBUL
(Bill-bi-chur)

To facing page 12

The breeding season is April and May and the nest is placed in low branches of fruit trees. On one occasion there were three nests in one of our school rooms. The nest is a well-constructed cup of dry stem of plants, mixed with dry grass stalks and shreds of vegetable fibre. It has a lining of some finer grass material. I have seen a nest, the outer part of which was entirely made of hair. Three eggs are laid of a pinkish colour with blotches of red of various shades. They measure 22·0×19·7 mm.

THE HIMALAYAN BLACK BULBUL

(Microscelis psaroides psaroides)

Kashmiri name: (Wan Bulbul)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Himalayan Black Bulbul is a dark-looking ashy-grey bird with coral-red beak and legs. It has an untidy crest.

The iris is dark brown, the tail bluntly forked with the outer feathers slightly curved outwards.

It extends from Chitral and Hazara to Bhutan. It has been observed at Kohat in winter. The birds generally visit Srinagar about the first week of May, where they can be seen and heared making a strident noise on the trees. Amidst the din they produce a whistle-like note, which is not unmusical. It is interesting to watch the birds eating the berries of the Persian lilacs while still on the wing. They stay around the town for about a fortnight and then retire to the side-valleys to breed. They have been observed at Chitternar, above Ganishpor (Lidder valley and above Dwara in the lower mixed forest at a height of 7,000 ft.

They are gregarious. Once I counted as many as 127 on one Persian lilac tree in the C. M. S. Hospital at Rainawari, Srinagar. Their food consists chiefly of the berries of various shrubs and trees, but insects are also eaten.

The breeding season lasts from April to the end of June. The nest consists of a neat cup of coarse-bladed grass, dry leaves, and moss, lined with fine grass stems or pine needles and moss roots, and bound on the outside with spiders webs. It is placed in the fork of a tree at a considerable height from the ground, and 3 or 4 eggs are laid of a pinkish white colour with spots of red.

CHAPTER V

The Creeper Family Certhidae

THE HIMALAYAN TREEE-CREEPFR

(Certhia Himálayana)

Kashmiri name: (Koil dider)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Himálayan Tree Creeper is a small bird rather larger than a sparrow, striped and barred with black, the chin and upper throat white, the upper-parts pale smoky brown. The iris is dark brown, the bill black, long, slender and curved; the toes and claws are very long, the tail is composed of stiff pointed feathers.

The plumage very closely resembles the bark over which it creeps, and in consequence it is rather difficult to detect.

It is found in Simla, Garhwal, Kumaon, Sikkim and Bhutan.

In summer it is found throughout the mountain forests from 7,000 ft. to 9,000 ft. We observed several at Pahalgam, Lidderwat, Gulmarg, and Ramban. Its day's work is to crawl from the trunk to the top-most leafy bough 'from dawn to dusk 'in search of insects in or under the bark. It flies from the top to resume its task at the bottom. In November we see it busily occupied on the mulberry, poplar and willow trees in the town.

The breeding season is from March to early May. The nest is composed of fine grasses, dry leaves, moss and *chips*, with a lining of feathers and fur. It is placed in a hole or crevice in a tree trunk and very frequently behind a loose bulging section of bark. The clutch consists of 4 to six eggs, which are white profusely spotted with various shades of red and brown.

THE WALL-CREEPER

(Tichodroma muraria)

Kashmiri name: (Lamba dider)

A WINTER MIGRANT

The Wall-Creeper is as large as a sparrow. Its upper plumage is ashy-grey. The chin and throat are black. When flying its wings seem bright red. In winter the chin and throat are white and the top of the head is brownish.

The bill is very long and slender, the wings rounded and the hind claws very large. The iris is dark brown, the bill and legs black.

It is found in the mountain ranges of Central and Southern Europe and eastward to Mongolia, Turkestan and the Himálayas.

This beautiful bird lives with us from October to March It may be seen eating insects on the rocks of Rustum Gaḍi, Shankaráchar, (Takhet-i-Sulaiman) and Hari Parbat. I have often watched them near Pampur creeping over the mounds of yellow soil and the steep banks, and some crawling on the stones of the ruined temple of Awantipur.

"On the face of the rock which the bird frequents its climbs in a zigzag fashion, sometimes head downwards, with a crab-like sidling motion, according to Canon Tristram, rapidly expanding and closing its wings in a succession of jerks and showing the brilliant, crimson shoulders at each movement".

The breeding season is in May and June. The nest is a pad of moss and wool, more or less mixed and lined with wool, fur, hair and feathers, placed in a crack in the face of some precipice often near streams. The clutch consists of 4 to 9 eggs. The colour is dull white with reddish spots.

CHAPTER VI

The Thrush Family (Turdidae)

The Bush chat
(Saxicola torquata)
Kashmiri name: (Dofa Tiriv)
A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Bush Chat is rather smaller than a bulbul. The upper parts are brownish black, there is a white patcn on the wings and at the base of the tail; the sides of the head, chin amd throat are black, with a large patch of white bordering the sides of the neck, the breast orange rufous. The female is dark brown with a rusty patch at the tail.

It is found in Western Siberia, Russian Turkestan to the South Urals, in the Himalayas, and the N. W. Frontier to Baluchistan.

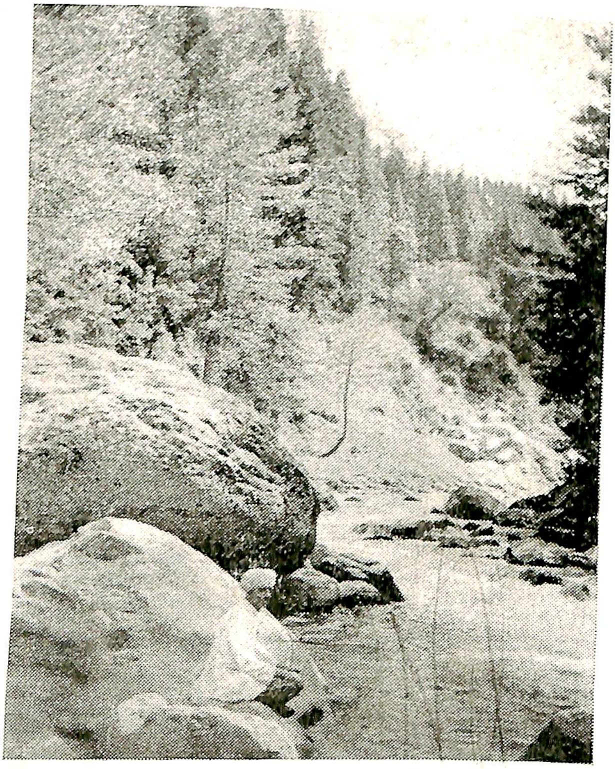
This is one of the commonest birds in the lower more open rocky and bush covered slopes of the surrounding hills. It is seen at Hari Parbat and Zeeṭhair. It perches at the top of some stone or bush and utters a short song.

It arrives in April and leaves for the plains late in October. Breeding commences in May. The nests are well-hidden in holes under stones or at the foot of small bushes on steep, rocky hill-sides. Four or five eggs are laid which are pale blue marked with faint chestnut spots. They measure 17·3×13 5 mm.

THE WESTERN SPOTTED FORKTAIL

Enicurus maculatus maculatus
Kashmiri name (Shákhal loṭ)
A SUMMER MIGRANT

This large species of Forktail is an ornament of mountain streams shaded with bushes and trees. The bird



The author watching birds in the Ferozpore Nallah - the habitat of Redstarts, Sandpipers and Dippers.

To face page 17.

is as large as a Myna with a conspicuous long tail barred with black and white. The white spots are scattered on its back and the abdomen is white.

Iris dark brown; bill black; legs white. It extends from the Himalayas through Assam and Siam to China.

It keeps along the banks of streams like a Wagtail eating insects which it finds in water. It is very fond of shady nooks along the ravines scooped by a stream. It may be found on the suburbs of Srinagar at Harwan or Dwara Ravine. A rare and smaller variety, the Little Fork-tail (Microdichla scouleri scouleri) with a very short tail, is found by rocky hill torrents and streams.

The nest is made of moss lined with grass and hairs well concealed in a depression of a bank or in the hollows of a tree.

The clutch consists of 3 to 5 eggs, white thickly speckled and mottled with brown and yellowish-brown.
The season is April and June.

THE KASHMIR REDSTART

Phoenicurus ochrurus phoenicuroides

Kashmiri: name (Wozul lot)

The bird is a little larger than a bulbul. The male has an orange chestnut abdomen and tail which it quivers at short intervals.

Iris dark brown; bill and legs black.
It is found breeding in Persia, Turkestan, Afghanistan and the mountains of Baluchistan.

It is seen here on the summer and winter migration round the gardens of Srinagar for sometimes, then it goes to higher elevations between 10,000 ft. to 15,000 ft. to breed.

The nest is placed in holes among stones. The clutch consists of 4 eggs, pale or very pale spotless blue and sometimes almost white.

THE WHITE-CAPPED REDSTART

(Chaimarrhornis leucocephals)

Kashmiri names: (Chets tál, Kumidı in Kolahoi)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

Red-start is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word (steorat-tail) and means "red tail."

This bird is rather larger than the bulbul. It has a velvet black plumage, snowy white cap, and the tail, rump and abdomen are bright chestnut red.

It is found from the hills of Baluchistan and the Afghan Frontier, right along the Himalayas up to Western China. It breeds at elevations of 6,000 ft. but the majority of nests are found between 8,000 and 13,000 ft.

This is a torrent bird. It rises perpendicularly over the silvery foam after an insect, and when the sun shines its tail glitters like a tongue of fire. At Kolahoi I did my best to find its nest but failed, I saw it coming with a worm in its beak, and as long as I looked as it, its mate scolded me, but as soon as I turned my head it disappeared at once.

It erects its tail and opens it like a fan when resting on a rock watching the current of a mountain stream. In the Gurais valley we found a nest on the top of a sandy precipice, but it was beyond our reach.

We saw the bird ât Harwan, Dwara, Lidwas (11,000 ft.) Achabal, Ferozepur Nala, the Lidder, the Sind, Gangabal, Koñsar Nág and the Kishen Ganga valleys. They breed from May to July. The clutch consists of 4 eggs which are very pale blue, marked with shades of rufous brown. They measure 23·1 × 16·3 mm.

THE PLUMBEOUS REDSTART

(Rhyacornis fuliginosa fuliginosa)

Kashmiri name (Kola Tiriv)

A SUMMEER MIGRANT

This bird is rather larger than a sparrow. The

body is dusky indigo-blue, the tail and abdomen bright chestnut.

The female has the whole upper plumage dull bluish brown, and a white mark shaped like a butterfly on her tail.

Probably the year-old birds are like their mothers. We saw a number of these (none with a red tail) on the rocky bank of the Kargil river in early August.

It is a torrent bird. There is no mountain stream where a pair is not seen flitting from stone to stone in the foamy spray of the rushing water which they love. We saw a pair at Harwan. Like all redstarts, they flirt their tails. They breed in May and June. The nest is generally well-concealed in a hole in a rock, or tree stump overhanging the water, less frequently in a tree at some distance from the stream. Four is the normal clutch of eggs. Their colour is pale greenish white, spotted with chestnut-brown. They measure $19{\cdot}8 \times 14{\cdot}6$ mm.

THE BLACK—THROATED THRUSH

(Turdus atrogularis)

Kashmiri name (Wanda kostur)

A WINTER MIGRANT

The Black-Throated Thrush is rather smaller than a Myna. It has a black throat. They are found round Shankaracharya and the Id-Gah in willow orchards where they may be seen feeding. They stay from October to March.

TICKELL'S THRUSH

(Turdus unicolor)

Kashmiri name: (Kostur)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Tickell's Thrush is rather larger than a bulbul. The upper plumage is ashy grey, the under parts slaty grey. The iris is brown, the eye-rim greenish yellow, the bill and legs yellow. It is generally seen feeding on lawns.

It is found in the Himalayas from Chitral to Easern Nepal, Sikkim, Eastern Assam and Manipur. In winter it moves down into the plains of India as far as Orissa. It arrives in March. The air is filled with their notes from every willow and poplar avenue. It is pleasant to sit under a shady chenar and listen to the untiring song of this bird. When in search of worms we hear it repeating "Tuck, Tuck, Tuck" with stretched neck. The song is somewhat like "peeu, peeu tserrr". It is the first bird to greet the dawn with its song.

It breeds in May and June. The nest is made of fine willow roots, mud and grass. On one occasion I found a nest which was entirely made of threads in the verendah of a garden where embroiderers were working. The number of eggs varies from 3 to 5 The ground colour is reddish white, speckled with dull-reddish brown. The eggs measure 27·1×19.3 mm.

The Grey-headed Thrush (Turdus castaneus castaneus) is a bird of dense Fir forest 8,000 to 10,000. It has a sweet song.

THE HIMALAYAN WHISTLING THRUSH

Myiophoneus temminckii temminckii

Kashmiri name: Házár Dástán / Kava kuñur

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Himálayan Whistling Thrush is as large as a Myna. Its entire plumage is deep blue black, its bill yellow, blackish along the top, and the legs black. It extends throughout the Himálayas from the hills of Baluchistan and the Afghan frontier to the east of Assam.

It is a torrent bird. It is found all along the mountain streams of Dwara, the Lidder, the Sind, the Kishanganga the Erin, the Vishau and Wardwon. When on a boulder near a stream, it is seen with tail erect. Its charming note is like a long whistle and banishes the weariness of the traveller on mountain paths. It has also a reproachful note. I once saw a young bird in a cage at Pahalgám, The parent bird showed its indignation by scolding harshly and flew down several times to kiss the young one. In November

we hear it round Hari Parbat and the Dal Lake. On August 27th at Kazalwan in the Kishenganga Valley, on the right bank of the river Ganga below the bridge, we found the nest of a bird in the niche of an overhanging rock. One of us threw a stone at the rock and a bird flew out. It was a whistling thrush. The nest looked like a cup. After some moments the male bird also appeared. Probably one sat on the nest to incubate the eggs, and the other stood on the rock like a sentinel to guard it.

The nest is made of moss lined with roots. The eggs are generally 3 in number. They are a pale green or cream-coloured, faintly mottled with pinkish markings. They measure 36·9×25·6mm.

CHAPTER VII

The Flycatcher Family (Muscicapidae)

"The Flycatchers form a group of birds feeding mainly on insects which are caught on the wing. The species of this group have very feeble feet which incapacitates them from walking on the ground, their usual habit being to wait on some convenient branch and swoop down on their insect prey, which is taken in the air".

—*Fletcher and Inglis*

Kashmiri name: { Young and female, Rángá bulbul
Adult, Fhambaseer (cotton flake)

Vernacular name: Shah bulbul

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Paradise Flycatcher is slightly smaller than a bulbul with a tail about 8 inches long. The cock and hen when young have orange upper plumage and bluish-black head with a crest, in the third year the male grows a long tail but retains the orange colour. In the fourth year the male assumes a white colour retaining the bluish-black of the head. The bill is fringed with coarse hairs.

It is found from the Himálayas to Ceylon. It also inhabits Afghanistan and Turkestan. In Ceylon it is called the "Cotton thief".

Of all the feathered visitors to the valley, I think the Paradise Flycatcher is the most conspicuous. Its pure white uniform against the deep green foliage of the Chinár trees appears most striking. It is a great pleasure to see the bird moving like a white flame as it flies after its prey. When it regains its perch it sits with hanging tail and devours the unfortunate fly. It visits the valley about the middle of April and leaves in late September.

"They must be to every one a source of wonderful admiration as they leap lightly about from twig to twig and fly hither and thither among the branches".

—*Cunningham*

It prefers to build its nest in a shady Chinar (plane) tree. This tree, owing to its cool, refreshing and invigorating shade is called the tree of Paradise and indeed it is fitting that such a bird should build in such a tree. The breeding season is May and June. The nest is like a cone with apex downowards. The materials used in building are the catkins of poplars and willows, vine bark, and fine grass cemented with cobwebs.

The clutch consists of 3 eggs. Their colour is pinkish-white with spots of bright reddish-brown. They measure $20{\cdot}8 \times 15{\cdot}4$ mm.

CHAPTER VIII

The Shrike Family (Lanidae)

THE RUFOUS-BACKED SHRIKE

Lanius schach erythronotus

Kashmiri name: (Hára wátaj)

Vernacular name: Lahtora

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Rufous-backed Shrike is rather smaller than the Myna. It has a large head, a long tail, a broad black bar through the eye and forehead, a rufous back, dark wings and tail and pale buff underparts.

This species is found from Baluchistan to the North Western Frontier and from the outer Himálayas to Eastern Bengal.

Wátaj means "executioner". As it kills other birds it rightly deserves the name. It prefers to sit on a tree where it can have a clear view all round. It is a bold and ferocious bird, killing birds and mice with its strong beak. We once saw the head of a mouse stuck on some barbed wire near the nest of a shrike. On another occasion (on a Thursday after-noon) during a Masters' meeting in the Principl's garden, I watched a bird coming with a dead sparrow. It hung the sparrow in the fork of a bush and began to take off its feathers. The body of the slain bird gave way and the head remained in the fork. Then the shrike took hold of the dead body and after several efforts impaled it on a thorn of the bush. I am sorry to say I paid more attention to its movements than to the news which our Principal was passing on to us. It is a great mimic. I have heard it successfully imitating Tickell's thrush.

The eggs are laid in May. The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs in a nest made of rags, wool and fine grass. The colour of the eggs is creamy white with brown spots. They measure 23·0×17·9 mm.



THE RUFOUS BACKED SHRIKE
(Hára Wátij)

To facing page 24

CHAPTER IX

The Campephagidae Family

THE SHORT–BILLED MINIVET

Pericrocotus brevirostris brevirostris.

Kashmiri name: (Wozul mini)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The minivet is rather smaller than a bulbul. These birds stay here only for a short time and then go to the pine forests to breed. The male has a long tail, red body and black head, while the female is bright yellow. On April 6th. I saw a pair near Munshi Bagh. On another occasion a pair was seen near Naseem. Late in April several have been observed in the Rampor, Rajpor forest towards Wular Lake and the forest near Koñsar Nág. On another occasion near Ajus there were so many birds on a mulberry tree that it appeared like a flame of forest.

CHAPTER X

The Drongo Family (Dicruridae)

The Indian Grey Drongo (The King Crow)
Dicrurus leucophaeus longicaudatus.

Kushmiri name: Gankōts, Télákōts

Vernacular name: Buchanga, Thampal

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The King Crow is considerably larger than a bulbul. The upper parts are glossy indigo, the lower parts dark grey. The iris is red, the bill and legs black, the tail long and widely forked at the end. It is found in the Western Himálayas from Hazara to Nepal.

It sits on a convenient branch of a tree so as to catch insects. It drives away crows and other birds which come to steal the eggs of the birds which have built on the same tree. For several years a bird built its nest in a chinar tree. The top boughs died and the bird was seen no more.

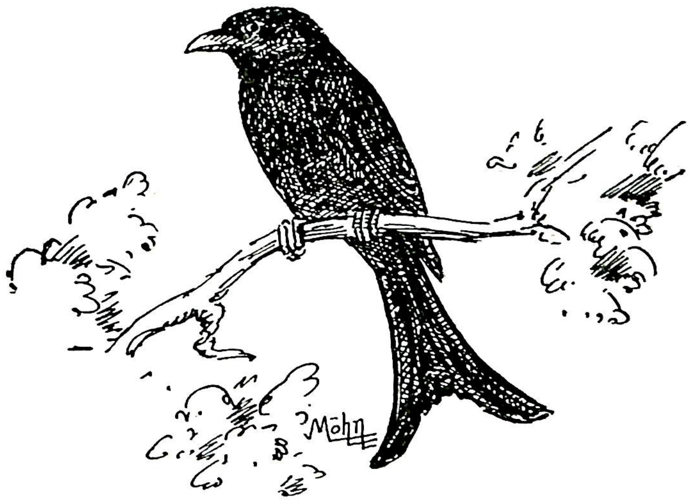
"The king crow is the Black Prince of the bird world, the embodiment of pluck. The thing in feathers of which he is afraid has yet to be evolved. Like the mediaeval knight he goes out seeking those on whom he can perform some small feat of arms. In certain parts of India he is known as kotawal, the official who stands forth to the poor as the impersonation of the might and majesty of the British Raj".

—*Dewar*

Donald records that he has heard one imitat a Shikra (a small bird of prey) so as to frighten away a pair of Mynas and thus secure the worm which they had caught.

The breeding season is in May and June. The nest is built of fine grass stems, slender twigs and roots, plastered with cobwebs and lichens and lined with fine grass and hair.

The eggs are 3 or 4 in number, pinkish white marked with dark reddish brown. They measure 23·2×17·9mm.



The King Crow
Ganpōts

To face page 26

CHAPTER XI

The Warbler Family (Sylviidae)

THE GREAT REED WARBLER

Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens

Kashmiri name: (Kurkoch)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a bulbul. It has greyish brown upper parts, light grey under-parts, a white chin, and a slender beak.

It is found in the Dal Lake and other swamps among bulrushes.

It arrives in the last week of April, and is heard among the bulrushes making a strident noise. It climbs to the top of a reed and then flies down again to continue its cry. This is somewhat like "*Babuch, Babuch, Chuch Chuch Babuje*".

The breeding commences in June. The nest is of a deep cup shape made exclusively of split rushes round three or more bulrushes. The eggs are white in colour marked with brown. They measure 22·6×15·8 mm.

THE PALE BUSH—WARBLER

Acrornish pallidus pallidus.

Kashmiri name: (Dofa Pich)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is heard from the bush covered slopes of mountains. One hears it on the Zeethair, Kulan, and Dwara slopes. "The call of the bird is remarkably loud and very peculiar. It is expressed in words.

You....................mixed-so-quick
He'll............... ... beat you"

—*Osmaston*

According to one peasant its note runs "*Checho*.. *pechanho moyiy* (oh uncle.. ...we lost aunt)."

The nest is rather untidy, domed, with a large side entrance composed of dry grass and lined with feathers. We found a number of nests at Bren village on almond trees and at Ajus on wild pomegranate trees. The eggs are about 4 in number, deep chocolate or purple brown in colour.

WARBLER FAMILY

Hume's Willow—Warbler

Phylloscopus mornatus humii

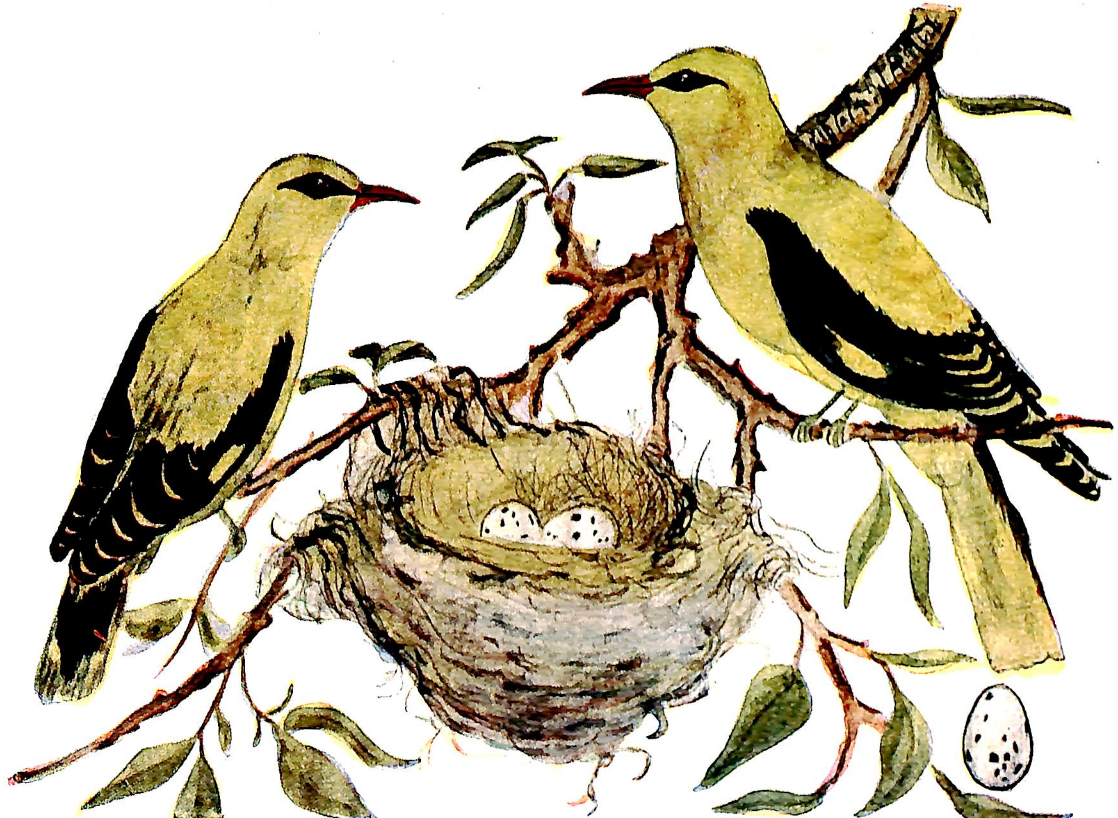
Kashmiri name: Viri Tiriv

The bird is as large as a sparrow. The over-coverts are green and underparts, white.

It is a bird of forest above 7,500 ft. and is partial to glades. It is abundantly found round Gulmarg and in similar other areas. It is a lively bird searching after insects among trees and bushes.

Its note according to Omaston is 'tissip'. It is found in Turkestan, Afghanistan, Western Himálayas, Garhwal and North-Western Frontier.

The nest is domed and lined with grass and pine-needles. It is placed on the ground. The clutch consists of four eggs which are white and spotted with reddish brown.



Female

Male

GOLDEN ORIOLE

(*Posh - i - nul*)

CHAPTER XII

ORIOLIDAE (THE ORIOLE FAMILY)

THF GOLDEN ORIOLE

Oriolus oriolus kundo

Kashmiri name: Poshi Nul (flower mongoose)

Vernacular name: Pilak

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This beautiful bird is slightly smaller than a Myna. The cock is bright yellow with a pink bill; its cheeks, wing, feathers and tail are black. The hen is of a greenish yellow colour. The iris is dark crimson, the legs dark slate, the tail slightly rounded.

The bird breeds in Turkestán, Gilgit, Afghánistán, Baluchistán, the Central and Western Himálayás, and in the plains from Rajputána to Cape Comorin. On August 9th. we saw a pair in Kargil.

It arrives here in April and sets to work on its nest in a willow or quince tree on the banks of the Dal Lake. It sometimes builds in chinárs in company with the King Crow.

Its sweet liquid note mingled with that of the thrush is very charming at dawn. Its note is somewhat like "peeho-peeho".

"The call note during the pairing season sounds like the words. 'Who are you' in a full rapid whistle, and its song is 'wheet, li, vee, o,' whence its vernacular name in Holland of 'Kiel, i, vee-vi". —*Seebohm*

It has been sung by Kashmir poets owing to its beautiful plumage and fascinating song. The song is interpreted as Shri Krishna Gopio, (Hindu deities), hence a sort of sacredness is attached to the bird. The food consists of

insects, caterpillars, berries and fruits. It cannot live in captivity. Golden Orioles breed in June and July, the nest being woven like a cradle (Guga manzul) in branches of chinárs, willow, quince or almond trees.

The clutch consists of 3 eggs which are white with dark reddish brown spots. They measure 29·3×20·3 mm.

CHAPTER XIII

STURNADAE (THE STARLING FAMILY)

Sturnus vulgaris humii

Kashmiri name: (Tsini-hañgur)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a bulbul. It is black in colour with reflections of green, purple and violet; the bill is yellow and the feet, reddish brown. In autumn we see spots on its body. It arrives in the last week of February and is seen and heard on chinárs, mulberry and poplar trees, shaking its wings uneasily at intervals as it sings with its head pointed upward.

Starlings are gregarious and are seen feeding on lawns and digging busily for the harmful grubs and insects on which they feed. Fruit, berries and grain are also eaten. On one occasion a Starling plucked a green leaf from an almond tree and carried it away in its beak. It reminded me of Noah's Dove.

In the evening they sit on a chinár tree and in company with Mynas make a deafening noise.

Kirke Swann records a provincial belief that if Starlings congregate in large numbers rain may be expected, but quotes Swainson as saying that in Brittany the belief is that it is a sign of impending cold weather. Here there is the same belief with respect to Kites.

The eggs are laid in May. Nests are made of grass and lined with feathers. They are placed in holes in trees or sometimes in walls, banks and houses.

Five eggs are laid of a very pale blue colour. They measure 28·8×20·7 mm.

THE MYNA

Acridotheres tristis trists
(The sad grasshopper eater)
Kashmiri name: (Hör)
Vernacular name: Maina
RESIDENT BIRD

The Myna is one of the most familiar birds of the valley. It finds itself at home when it enters any house. It searches every corner and turns every thing which it finds useful for its purpose.

The colour of the head, neck and the upper part of the breast is black. The back is brown.

"Iris reddish-brown, flecked with white, bill and a fleshy wattle below and behind the eye bright yellow; legs yellow, claws horny". —*Whistler*

It is distributed throughout the whole of the Indian Empire, Northern Kashmir, Baluchistan and Tenasserim and South of Mergui. It was introduced in Australia, Andamans, Hawaii and Newzealand and there it drove away other species.

The Myna is a noisy bird. At any time and in every garden we can hear its guttural and soft note of keeky, keeky, keeky, chur, chur, chur, kok, kok, kok, sometimes with the bobbing of its head. Even during the night at regular intervals we hear him. At sundown on a summer day along with Starlings and Jackdaws the noise which they make on a mulberry or a chinár tree is quite deafening.

Dewar calls it a bird of character. It is very bold and few birds dare to attack it. It is self-reliant and stands no nonsense. I remember how it once drove away a Jackdaw and usurped its nest.

There was a nest of a Jackdaw on the rafters supporting a balcony. The Myna always took away the twigs from the nest in the absence of the Jackdaw and the latter

always repaired it. One day it so happened that the Jackdaw and the Myna met face to face and fought. I watched it from the window. They both alighted in the compound, both stood on their tails and caught hold of each other with claws and beaks. It was exactly like two wrestlers. Sometimes one threw the other on the ground and vice versa. They were ringed by Jackdaws and Mynas. No one interfered but there was a very great noise, probably cheeron both sides. It lasted for 5 minutes when to my great disappointment a cat appeared on the scene and cleared the arena. The Jackdaw never came to that nest again.

The Myna's haughty nature has given rise to a proverb, *Hor chhe gös khewan, kör thöz thawit* (The myna eats rubbish, but keeps its head high). Its clean habits and compact body is used sometimes as a simile, *Hárihen hish* (like a little Myna).

It is a true friend to the peasant. When ploughing, watering or weeding his fields, the bird eats the injurious insects which harm the plants. The poor Hoopoe, after his hard work of digging the worm from the ground, finds the Myna and Shrike ready to steal the tit-bit. It keeps on plodding and the Myna keeps on robbing.

It feeds on both animal and vegetable food. When offered cooked vegetables with meat or cheese, it would prefer meat or cheese and leave the vegetables. Sometimes it would eat cooked vegetables and chillies. It is very fond of pears.

The nest is built in holes in houses, walls, or chimneys. The material used is straw, fine twigs, feathers, felt hair, paper etc. A lady once dropped a ten rupee note out of her pocket. A Myna at once took it away to its nest behind the hillock. I once placed a broken pot of earthernware on the wall of my compound. It was quickly utilised as a nest and on June 3rd I found three eggs of a deep blue colour. They usually measure $32{\cdot}3 \times 21{\cdot}9$ mm.

CHAPTER XIV

CINCLIDAE (DIPPER FAMILY)

THE WHITE BREASTED DIPPER (WATER OUSEL)

Cinclus cinclus kashmiriensis

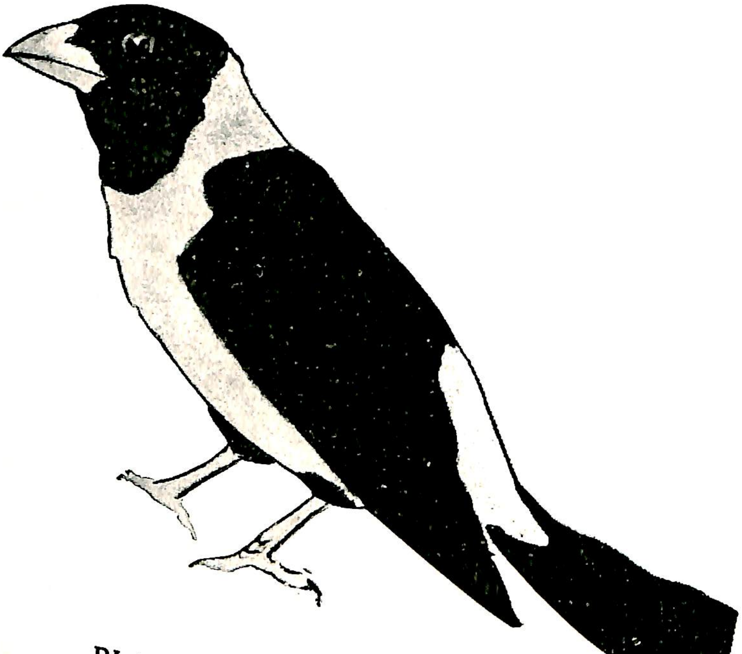
Kashmiri name: Dungal

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a Myna. It has a white breast, a brown body and a short tail. It is a torrent bird and is generally found along mountain streams flowing from ranges above 10,000 ft. near glaciers and snow beds On August 4, we saw a bird at the mouth of the Lidder, where it flows from the Kolahoi Glacier. It was in the act of raising and lowering its body probably taking exercise to keep itself warm.

It dives in search of food. It eats water-beetles, aquatic insects and their larvae. They breed from May to July. The nest is a large oven-shaped mass of moss, placed in the crevice of a rock in a hole or bank, over-hanging swift-flowing water. 3 or 4 eggs are laid of a pure white colour.

The Brown Dipper is also a torrent bird found at lower elevations and commoner than the white breasted variety.



BLACK AND YELLOW GROSBEAK
(Wyet Tont)

To facing page 35

CHAPTER XV

FAMILY FRINGILLIDAE. (SPARROW FAMILY)

THE BLACK AND YELLOW GROSBEAK.

Perrisospiza icteroides icteroides.

Kashmiri name: Wyet Tont.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is rather larger than a bulbul. It has a yellow body, black head and ashy conical beak.

These birds are common in silver fir and mixed forests between 8,000 and 10,000 ft. They feed largely on the fruits of shrubs and undergrowth in these forests. They construct nests high up in fir trees. We found some birds near Aru (Lidder Valley) in July. It is common in the fir forests in and around Gulmarg up to about 10,000 ft.

THE ROSEFINCH.

Corpodacus crythrinus roseatus

Kashmiri name: Gulöb Tsar.

A SUMMER VISITOR

This bird is as large as a sparrow. The male has dull crimson overcoverts mixed with brown, the lower parts palish white. Female and immature male have greenish brown wings and tail margined with pale yellow, a double whitish bar across the wing coverts. These birds pass through the valley where they stop for a week or so. On April 24th we saw a pair in the almond gardens near the Central Jail. They go to breed across the Himálayan Range into Ladákh, Drás and Suru valleys In August we heard the cheery note of the bird "*which it, which you, which you,*" all along the way from Suru to Kargil.

The food consists of wild cherries, mulberry seeds and fruit.

The nest is a cup shaped structure of grass lined with fine roots and stems. It is placed in a low bush.

4 eggs are laid, which are of a blue colour with black or red streaks or spots. They measure 20·8 × 14·9 mm.

THE GOLDFINCH

Carduelis caniceps caniceps

Kashmiri name: Sehara

A SUMMER MIGRANT

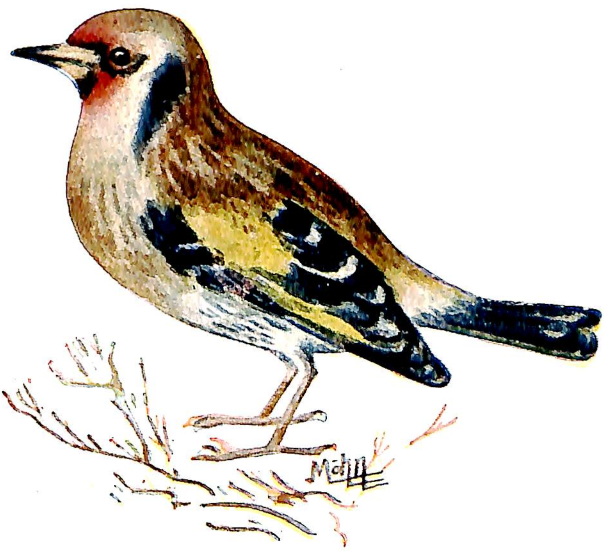
The Goldfinch is rather smaller than a Sparrow. There are two yellow bars in the wing. The base of the bill is crimson and black, the bill is sharp, conical and pinkish white. The young have no crimson at the base of their bills.

In winter we see these birds in flocks on the tops of chinár trees feeding on the seeds. They are also seen in late autumn feeding on seeds and flower plants in Shálamár garden. It has a pleasing sprightly song. They are also seen at the foot of Shankaráchár and in the almond gardens round the fort. They sing in unison. At the end of May they retire to their breeding haunts. According to Mr. Osmaston they rear the first brood between 5,000 and 7,000 ft. in blue pines and large shrubs. They leave in July for higher altitudes and build second nests between 9,500 and 11,000 ft. At Kacheon in the Suru valley we heard the celestial music of these birds and other finches in August.

A good number of these birds are caught in winter and caged for sale. They seem to thrive in captivity. They are fed on '*malida*' (a preparation of pulse and ghee).

The nest is a neat structure of vegetable cotton with a little hair. It is placed in a tree or bush. The clutch consists of 4 or 5 eggs of pale bluish white, spotted with purple and brown.

BIRDS OF KASHMIR



THE GOLDFINCH
(*Sehara*)

THE HOUSE SPARROW

Passer domesticus parkini

Kashmiri name: (male : Kantur / female : Tsar)

Vernacular name: Gouriya

A RESIDENT BIRD

The House Sparrow is one of of the most common birds of the valley. The male bird has a rich chestnut colour with black lines on its upper parts, white cheeks, black chest and a black bar on the throat, conical beak, and under parts grey, ashy crown. The female has a pale grey back with black lines without any black on the chest. Iris brown; bill brown, black in the male in summer, legs brown.

This Sparrrow is widely spread throughout Europe, Northern Africa and the great part of Asia, and has been introduced into America and Australia.

In winter when the food outside is exhausted, flocks of these birds are seen entering houses from open windows. It is interesting to see them separating chaff from the grain. They eat seeds and vegetables but they rear young ones on insects. The peasants keep rags and dead birds on sticks in their fields to scare the birds. At several research institutions the stomach contents have been examined and it has been found that the bird eats more vegetable than insect food.

The male bird begins his nuptial dance from the last week of February. He lowers his wings, raises his tail and hops on his feet. He does this when he sees a female whom he tries to approach. When on the upper branch of a tree, he assumes this form and descends to a lower branch to meet his lover. When he reaches the female she always dislikes and pecks him. Not a single case has come under my observation where a female welcomes such gestures. I know an instance when a He-sparrow in this posture was attacked and pecked by seven She-sparrows On the contrary I remember an occassion when a She-sparrow was made a prisoner by nine He-sparrows.

They are very noisy. In the morning and evening they make a great chattering with the Mynas when roosting on a chinár or a mulbery tree Sometimes their noise during the day signifies the presence of a snake But when in company of Cinnamon-headed Sparrows, Goldfinches, and Red fronted Finches, their twittering is a pleasant addition to the chorus.

Almost every Himálayan house contains the nest of one or more Sparrows. It has several broods The nest is a bundle of turf grass, straw, felt hair and feathers, with a depression for 5 or 6 eggs which are of various colours with spots. They measure 21·7×15 4 mm.

The cinnamon headed Sparrow (Passer rutilans debilis) is known in Kashmir by Dalchini Tsar. It is found round Pahalgám, Gund and Sonamarg. It has a cinnamon coloured head and yellow underparts. It is not found in Srinagar.

"There is a superstition in Kent that if a Sparrow be kept in captivity the parents of the person who caught it will die".

The following Bohemian charm to keep Sparrows from crops is given by Swainson. Stick upright in a field a splinter cut from a piece of timber out of which a coffin has been made. Lay a bone taken from a grave on the threshold or window-sill of barn. If, while sowing, you put three grains of your corn under your tongue, wait till you have reached the end of the furrow in silence, and then spit them out "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," no Sparrow will come into your field, though your neighbour's may be full of them.

THE GOLD FRONTED FINCH

Metaponia pusilla

Kashmiri name: Adult-Tyok. / Young-Taer.

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This is a tiny bird with a golden red cap on its head. There is a mixture of yellow and black in its plumage. It is found here in autumn and during the spring migration. The bird catchers trap it with a net in autumn and cage it. They do not live long in capitivity. They seem unable to bear summer heat. I have met only two which lived throughout the summer. These birds are found round Shankaráchár and Hári Parbat. They breed in dry rainless country beyond the Himálayan Range. We saw several in the Suru valley.

The nests are like those of the Gold Finch and are placed in the low bushes of the wild rose. 4 eggs are laid. They are very pale blue or white, with some dark spots.

The Red-browed Finch (callacanthis burtoni) is a common bird of the Himálayan and Pantsál Ranges. In summer they are found between 8,000 and 10,000 ft. They feed on ground and have no song.

THE GREEN FINCH

Hypacanthis spinoides spinoides

Kashmiri name: Sböz Tsar

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a Sparrow. It is heavily built about the head and neck and yellowish green all over, mixed with black. The abdomen is of a brighter yellow. The bill is sharp, conical and pointed. They are often found in open portions of mixed forests between 6,500 and 8,000 ft. They can be seen in flocks round the temple

at Gulmarg. In winter they visit the Peshawar valley, Afghán Hills and Manipur, The male has a pretty little song.

THE MEADOW BUNITNG

Emberiza cia stracheyi

Kashmiri name: won Tsar

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is rather larger than a Sparrow. The overcoverts are chestnut brown, the head pale brown with black lines and two vertical bars are seen in the tail when flying. They are found in bush-covered slopes of mountains and breed up to 10,000 ft from Hazara country and Gilgit to Kumaon. It is found at Zeethair, Dwara and Kangan. Breeding commences early in June. The nest is placed on a steepish slope on the ground generally at the base of a low bush.

The full clutch of eggs is usually 3, marked with brown lines on a white ground. They measure 21·5×15·7 mm.



CHAPTER XVI

HIRUNDINIDAE (SWALLOW FAMILY)

THE SWALLOW

Hirundo rustica

Kashmiri name: Katij

Vernacular name: Ababil

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a Sparrow. The upper plumage is glossy blue black. The chin and brow are chestnut, the upper breast black, the underparts white. The outer feathers of the tail are long and forked. The legs are short.

They arrive early in March and are seen flying along roads and rivers with open mouths to catch insects. Sometimes they are seen taking mud in their beaks to build their nests. These they build in houses. Their saliva is mixed with the mud. The props are first raised and then layer after layer, till a semi cup-shaped nest against the wall is constructed and inlaid with soft material and feathers. The bird appears to return regularly year by year to its old nest. 4 to 6 eggs are laid, which are white with dark red brown spots. They measure 19·6×13·7 mm. There is a belief among some physicians that if you sprinkle termeric on the young of the Swallow, it will think that they have got jaundice. It will fly off at once and get a substance resembling crytallised sugar and will keep it in the nest. This should be carefully removed and used as a specific medicine for jaundice.

When swallows build a nest in houses it is supposed to be auspicious.

Russian peasants believe that the Swallow flies to us from Paradise on March 25th.

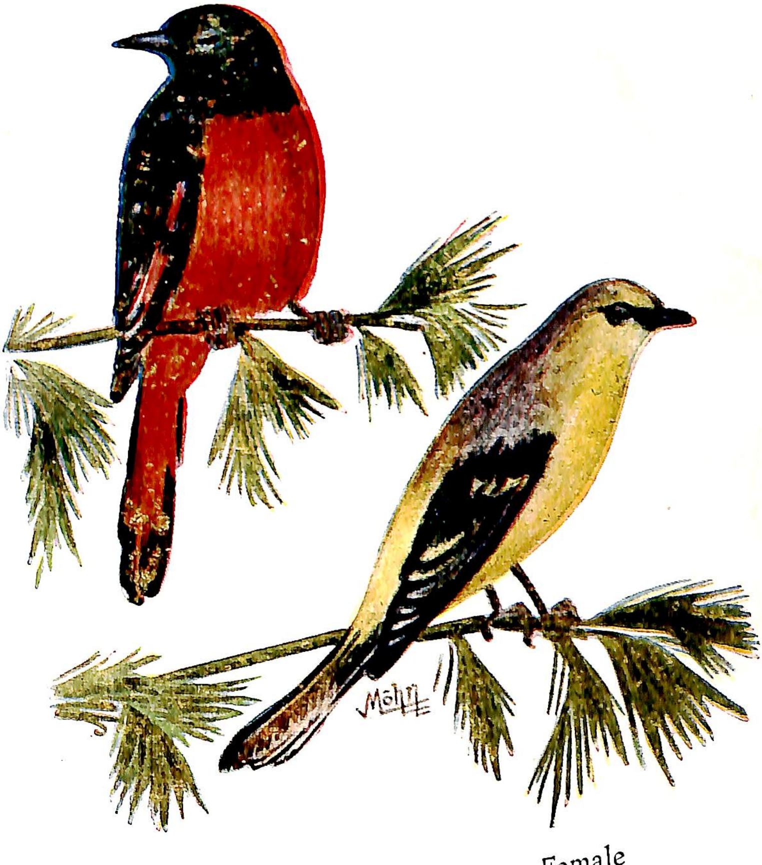
"The Arabs call it the "Bird of Jesus" and the "Bird of Paradise" because to it alone are the gates of Eden open".

"In Germany their presence is believed to preserve the house from storms, fire and evil". —*Dyer*

It is believed that the nest when made into a paste and placed on the bare head stops bleeding from the nose.

There is an old legend quoted by Swainson:

"Adam, when descending from Paradise to the earth, first put his foot on the island of Sarandip, and Eve descended at Jidda. Adam being alone, began to lament his fate in so piteous a manner that the cherubim, touched by his lamentation, complained to the Almighty. God sent the Swallow, which came to Adam and begged him to give her some hair of his whiskers. The Swallow having got some of his whiskers flew to Jidda, where she took also some of Eve's hair and made in that way the first step of uniting them together again. In recompense for what the Swallow carried on as internuncio between Adam and Eve she is allowed to nestle in the dwellings of men".



Male

Female

SHORT-BILLED MINIVET
(*Wozul Mini*)

CHAPTER XVII

MOTACILLIDAE (WAGTAIL FAMILY)

These birds get their popular name from the curious dipping motion of the tail, which accompanies every movement of the body. They are water-loving birds who seek there their insect food.

THE WHITE WAGTAIL

Motacilla alba hogsoni

Kashmiri name: Dobbai

Vernicular name : Dhoban

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a sparrow. It has a graceful shape with a long tail. Black above, white forehead, sides of the face and neck, throat and wing feathers black, underparts white.

On March 4th a flock of pied wagtails was seen at Chandmari. A few days later, grey and yellow wagtails were seen feeding toghether on the same maidan. On 25th of the same month there was not a single bird to be seen there. On July 31st we saw all the above mentioned kinds of wagtails feeding on a shallow stream coming down from an ice bed in Rewal Ravine of the Liddar Valley. During the winter months a few pied and grey wagtails are often seen feeding on insects near the water.

Once when on an excursion with some school boys, I met a tonga driver who gave me a quaint explanation of why a wagtail wags its tail. He said, "It is a wise bird. It thinks its tail very heavy; so much so that if it were to rest on the ground the earth would give way. Hence it keeps it wagging".

They breed in May and June, the nest being placed generally under a stone or a thick low bush on a stony island or in part of the dry river or stream bed.

It lays 4 white eggs, with numerous tiny grey spots and dots, and sometimes a black line.

They measure 21·9×15·6 mm.

In Cornwall, one perching on a window sill is to be a sign of a visit from a stranger —*Swann*

There is a Border belief that the bird ought always to wag its tail nine times on alighting; should the number be less or more it is very unlucky for the person who is counting. —*Bogam*

THE GREY WAGTAIL

Motacilla cinerea melanope

Kashmiri name: Khök Dubbái

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a sparrow. It is slender in shape with a long tail. Head and back grey, chin, throat and foreneck white. The lower plumage is yellow, growing brighter towards the tail.

It is a bird of stream and rivers. It does not hop, but runs quickly when it finds an insect. In winter it migrates to the plains, and reaches an altitude of 8,000 to 13,000 ft. The nests are built in May. They are composed of dry grass and weeds lined with hair, and are placed under a stone, generally near a stream.

Five eggs are laid with spots of pale yellow or greyish brown. They measure 18·2×14·10 mm.

THE YELLOW-HEADED WAGTAIL

Motacilla citreola citreoloides

Kashmiri name: Ledör Dub-bái

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a sparrow. The cock bird

is very handsome. It has a bright yellow head and the breast and back are black. There is a yellow streak above the eye. The hen birds are found in two distinct phases of plumage. (1). Young birds presumably one year old, where the yellow of the male bird is replaced by very pale yellow almost white. (2) Birds of two years and over much yellower than (1) but paler yellow than the males. It is a common bird in swamps and lakes. They walk freely over the weedy surface of the water and eat insects. We found several in the Dal Lake, Padshahi Bagh swamps and at Kanital (14,400 ft.) at the foot of the Bhat Khol glacier. They are also found in Ladakh.

The nests are placed on the ground in tufts of grass. Four is the usual number of eggs. They are mottled pale khaki or yellow brown with often a black streak at the broad end. They measure $20{\cdot}1 \times 14{\cdot}5$ mm.

CHAPTER XVIII

ALAUDIDAE (LARK FAMILY)

THE LITTLE SKYLARK.

Alauda gulgula guttata

Kashmiri name: Dider.

A SUMMER MIGRANT

Ethereal minstrel! Pilgrim of the sky!
— *Wordsworth*

This bird is streaky brown, buff-white below and with pale buff edges to the tail which become conspicuous in flight. We saw a number of birds in Dras and Suru valleys. They frequent barley fields and grass meadows. The song is uttered while soaring. They breed in May. The nests are placed on the ground in a slight depression among grass on young barley. 4 eggs are laid. They are of a greenish brown colour, thickly speckled and mottled with a darker brown.

We found a nest on shore of the Gangabal Lake on July 18th, containing 4 hard-set eggs.

They measure 21·5 × 16·6 mm.

There is another kind of lark which is plumper and has a short tail. It is called Jal. It comes in winter in large numbers, is caught in nets and sold to the shopkeepers. I remember one who had ten of them in cages. They feed them on malida (pulses plus ghee). They live long in captivity.

CHAPTER XIX

ORDER———PICIDAE
(WOODPECKER FAMILY)

"All the woodpeckers find their chief supply of food in the crevices of the bark of trees. Their feet have sharp strong claws; and two of the claws are placed forward and two backward enabling the birds to cling with ease perpendicularly on the trunks and limbs of trees; they are also helped by the structure of the tail, the feathers of which are very strong and pointed, this acts as a prop to the bird."
—*Hodges*

The tongue is long, worm like, pointed and barbed at the tip. It can be stretched out and with-drawn. A kind of fluid covers the tongue to which the grubs stick.

THE GREEN WOODPECKER

Picus squamatus squamatus.

Kashmiri name: Koel Maköts.

A WINTER MIGRANT.

This brid is rather larger than a crow. It is green with pale underparts covered with black patches In winter it is found on poplar trees, striking the bark for insect food. In summer it ascends to wooded areas where it breeds.

THE PIED WOODPECKER.

Dryobates himálayensis.

Kashmiri name: Hór koel maköts

Koel-Ku-Kar (tree hen); Koel Tatuk in the Loláb.

This bird is as large as a Myna. Its upper parts are barred with black and white and under-neath it is whitish with dark streaks. There is a reddish patch under the tail. The male has a crimson crest.

In winter it is seen moving jerkily on willows. On March 2nd in a willow orchard near Sonawár, I was attracted by the behaviour of a pied woodpecker. It made a noise and turned its head right and left and then stopped for a few seconds It repeated the exercise of turning its head I watched the bird fot ten minutes. During this time it repeated the exercise 5 times and then flew away.

Breeding commences in April when they are in well -wooded areas and hills. We found a pair on the tall poplars of the Gurais valley. Four white, glossy eggs are laid. They measure 26·5×19·1 mm. each.

"This bird alone amongst all the birds rears its youing in holes in trees. It is commenly believed that if a shepherd plugs the entrance with a peg the bird can make it fall out by applying a certain herb." —*Pliny*

"The Woodpecker plant is a magic root which has the virtue of communicating superhuman strength to him who rubs his limbs with it."

THE WRYNECK

Iynx torquilla japonica.

Kashmiri name: Viri Moyt.

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a bulbul. "The wryneck or snake bird owes its name to its peculiar habit of writhing the head and neck and of hissing when disturbed on the nest."

The upper parts are brown and grey with black markings. A black bar extends from the top of the head to the middle of the back. Underparts creamy white, narrow black bars on chest; throat, neck and tail barred with brown and grey.

It is generally found on willow trees, holding on to the bark. It emits a noise like "Pee, pee, pee." The bird

arrives in early April.

Breeding commences in the middle of May. The eggs are laid in holes, chiefly in the rotten portions of willow trees excavated by the parent birds. The eggs are laid on bare wood on a layer of fine chips. Six eggs are usually laid of a pure white glossy colour. They measure $21 \cdot 1 \times 15 \cdot 5$ mm.

CHAPTER XX

ORDER———ANISODACTYLI

CORACIADAE (ROLLER (FAMILY)

THE ROLLER.

Coracias garulla semenowi.

Kashmiri name: Nilia Krash.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This is a bule bird as large as a Myna, When flying it reveals dark blue wings and tail, banded with light blue. The lower parts are pale blue through-out It extends from the Altai Mountains to Siberia and winters in Cape Colony passing through eastern Africa and Egypt. It is a common bird in the Kashmr Valley and in the Sind, Lidder and Loláb up to 6,500 ft. The birds arrive in spring and leave in October They are often seen perched on telegraph wires or the dead bough of a tree from whence they can have a commanding view of their surroundings and are ready to pounce upon a grasshopper or a mouse or any insect they see. Canon Tristram relates how he saw flocks of rollers migrating near Mount Tabor in Palestine on April 12th. One of these flocks settled on some trees near a fountain and made a strident noise. "After a volley of discordant screams one or two birds were alarmed and started from their perch to commence a series of gambols and somersaults in the air, then in a moment or two the whole flock followed their example, this strange performance being repeated many times in succession.

They breed in June. The nesting site is a hole in a steep river bank or in a hollow tree.

Five or six pure white eggs are laid. They are frequently all over with small dark brown spots which can be easily removed by washing. They measure 36·3×29·0 mm.



BEE-EATER
(Tulri khāv)

To facing page 51

CHAPTER XXI

MEROPIDAE (BEE-EATER FAMILY)

THE BEE-EATER

Merops apiaster.

Kashmiri name: Tulri khāv

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird has a beautiful plumage, a curved beak and long wings and tail. The middle tail feathers are elongated. The upper parts are brick coloured, the others are a mixture of blue and green, the throat is bright yellow.

They arrive in late April and leave early in September. They are generally seen hovering near the slopes of Shankarách-ár and Hári Parbat uttering a note like "tearrp". On April 28th I saw one in the act of digging a hole for its nest on the southern slope of Hári Parbat in the soft yellow soil. On July 22nd we saw a flock on the telegraph wire at Safapor. They are very fond of eating bees. Dr. E. F. Neve killed one, once and placed it over the beehives to save the bees from being eaten. The plan was very successful.

They winter in Sind and even in Cape Colony, where it is said they breed a second time.

"During my stay at Gibraltar" writes Colonel Irby, "bee-eaters decreased very much in the neighbourhood, being continually shot to put into ladies' hates on account of their bright plumage. Owing to this vile fashion we saw no less than seven hundred skins, all shot in Tangier in the spring, which were consigned to some dealer in London."

Breeding commences early in June and the birds usually nest in small scattered parties. The nest is a hole about 2 inches in diameter, excavated in soft yellow soil. The hole slopes gently upwards for a distance of about 3 feet, at the end of which there is a wide, bare egg-chamber 9 inches or so in diameter

The eggs are laid from 5 to 6 in number, pure white glossy and nearly round. They measure 25·8 ×21·2 mm.

CHAPTER XXII

ALCEDINIDAE (KING-FISHER FAMILY)

THE BLUE KING-FISHER.

Alcedo atthis pallasii.

Kashmiri name: Kola tonch.

A RESIDENT BIRD.



This bird is a little larger than a sparrow. It has an attractive plumage. The wings are dark blue, the back light blue, underparts orange, bill long and black, chin white, two white spots on either side of face, legs red, claws dusky. The bird is generally seen on a willow branch with concentrated look on the water. It darts like an arrow and catches its prey and then perches on the branch again. It batters the head of the fish against the branch of the tree till it is dead and then swallows it head foremost. It sometimes

hovers like a pied kingfisher. I once saw the bird, while watching for a fish, raise and lower its body several times, and also lift its short tail

"Its note is a shrill "chee" uttered most often on the wing. The flight is low and swift, generally close to the surface of the water". —*Kershaw*

I remember seeing a parent bird with three young ones perched on a willow branch. The parent bird dived several times into the water, not after fish, but probably to show its young ones how to dive, and the young ones did like-wise.

Breeding begins in April and fresh eggs may be found till the end of May. Nest holes are dug in clay banks, sides of wells, or hollows of willow trees. A nest has been found in the Zeethair slope above and away from the Dal Lake.

From 5 to 7 eggs are laid, which are pure white. They measure 21·2×17·6 mm.

"The ancients ascribed to the King-fisher power of enriching its possesor, preserving peace and harmony in families and imparting additional grace and loveliness to those who wore its feathers" —*Swainson*

"In Bohemia a caged King-fisher in the house was considerrd to bring good furtune, as it was the spirit of luck." *Groman*

"The Tartars used to pluck the birds' feathers, cast them into the water and carefully preserve such as float, pretending that if with one of these feathers they touch a women or even her clothes she must fall in love with them" —*Gmelin*

THE PIED KING-FISHER

Ceryle rudis leucomelanura

Kashmiri name: Hor Kola Tonch

A RESIDENT BIRD

The Pied King-fisher is fairly common on the Wular.

Dal and Anchár lakes and is also found along the Vitastá (Jhelum). The plumage is entirely black and white, and the beak long and black. It is rather smaller than a Myna.

It is interesting to watch the bird when flying over an expanse of water. It rises high, vibrates its wings and hoves like a kestrel, pointing its beak downward. As soon as its keen eyes detect a fish, it drops like an iron ball on its prey. I once saw a bird with a fish about 5 inches long in its beak on the bank of the Jhelum (Vitastá). It was beating the head of its prey against a clod of earth.

There is another larger species (Ceryle lugubries guttulata) found along the larger rivers and side streams. It does not hover in the air, but dives after a fish from a fixed perch.

The breeding season is in March. Holes in which to lay eggs are dug in steep banks, often but not always near streams. There is a layer of fine fish bones thrown up in 'castings' by the parent bird.

Five or six white eggs are laid. They measure 3·03×23·6 mm.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE UPUPIDAC (HOOPOE FAMILY)

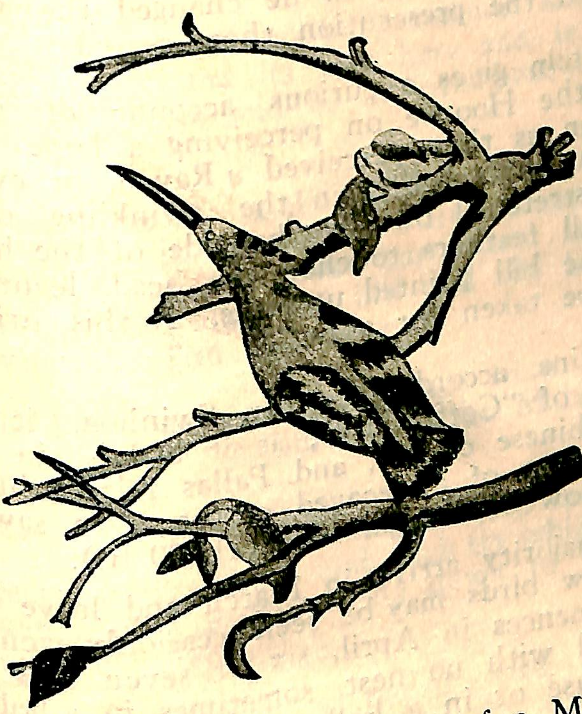
THE HOOPOE.

Upupa epops epops.

Kashmiri name: Satut.

Vernacular name: Hud-hud

A SUMMER MIGRANT.



The Hoopoe is about the size of a Myna. It is one of the early visitors to the valley. The wings and tail are marked with bars of black and white. The bill is long, slender and curved, the remainder of the plumage is fawn colour. The feathers of tne crest are broadly tipped with white and black. The crest generally remains closed, but when the bird is startled, and at the moment when the hoopoe alights on the ground, it opens to form a beautiful 'corona'.

This bird is met with in open and cultivated country. It feeds almost entirely on the ground and is very partial to grassy lawns, digging the soil with its beak for insects, caterpillars and grubs. The Shrike and Myna watch him working and when an insect is taken out they at once come and take away the prey. Forgetting the trick he goes on working industriously till he gets something for himself. According to the legend he is said to be the son of Solomon, hence he had a golden crown. So the people in greed for gold used to kill him. One day he referred the matter to his father, so he changed the golden crown into flesh and the presecution then ceased.

Bechstein gives a curious account of the attitude assumed by the Hoopoe on perceiving a large bird in the air. "As soon as they perceived a Raven, or even a Pigeon they were on their bellies in the twinkling of an eye, their wings stretched out by the side of the head, so that the large quill feathers touched the head, leaning on the back with the bill pointed upwards. In this curious posture they might be taken for a rag".

In China, according to Mr. Swinhoe, it is known by the name of "Coffin-bird", as it breeds in the holes of exposed Chinese coffins, and Pallas relates his finding a nest in the chest of a decayed corpse. We saw a pair at the top meodow of Dudgai Hill (11,000 ft.).

The majority arrive in March and leave in September, but a few birds may be seen occasionly even in winter. Breeding commences in April, six or seven eggs being laid on the ground with no nest, sometimes in a hole in a mud wall, in a house or in a hollow tree. Canon Stokoe found a nest in his wood go-down with seven young ones. The eggs are whitish blue, but they soon discolour into a pale dirty greenish grey.

They measure 26·2×17·6 mm.

The crest was considered a royal emblem and, according to Aclian, "even upon the sceptres of the gods a Hoopoe is an augmentation of honour".

"The Egyptians used the figure of a Hoopae to represent gratitude—believing that it was the only animal which repaid its aged parents by building a nest in the place where it was reared, trimming their wings and bringing them food until they acquired new plumage and were able to find themselves once more". —*Swainson*

THE WHITE BREASTED KING-FISHER

Halcyon smyrnenisii smyrnensis

Kashmiri name:—Parim Kolatonch

This beautiful bird is not very common as its brothers are. It has recently found its way here and it is to be hoped that it will thrive and be an ornament of our rivers and lakes.

It is comparatively smaller that a Myna and it can be easily detected by its conspicaus white breast, chin and throat. The head, nape and lower parts are brown. The upper parts are bright blue, the bill and the beak are red. There is a white bar in the wings.

The bird has an extensive range from Asia Minor across Persia, India, Ceylon, Burma, and the Malaya Peninsula to Southern China.

"This typical King-fisher is mainly a land bird and feeds on insects, lizards, frogs and such fry which it captures after the manner of a Roller flying down to them on the ground from an elevated perch"

I saw a specimen on a poplar tree, opposite the Leper Asylum. On the other occasion the other specimen dived from an electric wire into the Jhelum (Vetastá) near Fateh Kadal (III Bridge). On Dec. 12 we saw several on a willow tree in the Dal Lake.

Its scream is heard when it flies along the surface of water. Its speed must be about 30 miles an hour.

April and May are the breeding months. The nest in form of a hole is dug in a bank not necessarily near water.

The clutch consists of four to seven eggs of pure white with gloss.



THE HIMALAYAN CUCKOO
(Hor Kuk)

To facing page 59

CHAPTER XXIV

ORDER——COCCYGES

CUCULIDA (CUCKOO FAMILY)

THE HIMALAYAN CUCKOO

Cuculus canorus canorus

Kashmiri name : Hor Kuk

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The upper plumage is black, underparts white, a white band through the wing, white tips to the long tail feathers. Its call of two notes attracts attention. They are heard in the bush-covered slopes of Zeethair in Zaberwan Hill. They do not build their own nests, but deposit their eggs in the nest of the Streaked-Laughing Thrush. The young cuckoo throws the rightful offspring out of the nest. They are growing common in the valley.

CHAPTER XXV

ORDER —— PSITTACI

PSITTACIDAE (THE PARROT FAMILY)

THE SLATY-HEADED PARAKEET

Kashmiri name: Tota, / Shoga in Lolab Valley

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This noisy bird has a green plumage, red beak, and a slate coloured head. It is seen on walnut trees busily engaged in eating the nuts. They arrive in April and leave when the pears are ripe. We saw them at Olus on the bank of the Wular and at Sogám in the Loláb Valley.

THE GREEN PARAKEET

Psittacula krameri

Kashmiri name: Tota

The green parakeet is as large as a Myna with a long tail. It has a light green colour, strong red hooked beak and a red semicircle round its head. The female has no red collar round her neck.

Iris pale yellow; bill cherry red, lower mandible blackish, feet dusky slate or greenish.

The bird is very fond of the berries of the Persian lilacs. In 1936 half a dozen of these birds stayed in winter to feed on the berries of the Persian-lilacs and we see flocks of these birds in summer, propagating by the half dozen birds which were seen there regularly in the C. M S. Hospital garden, Rainawari. Of course, their number is increased by the migrants from the plains. They scream when they fly in flocks from one tree to another. The keepers of almond gardens shout at them when the flocks of them alight on trees to eat fruit. It is very interesting to see the bird eating fleshy part of the berry of Persian-lilac and leaving the stone aside. They eat the berry holding it with one foot.

The breeding season is from April to May and eggs are laid in a natural hole or it may be excavated by the bird.

The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs of glossy white colour as large as that of a Dabchick.

CHAPTER XXVI

ORDER——STRIGES

THE STRIGIDAE (OWL FAMILY)

THE INDIAN BARN OWL

Tyto alba Javanica

Kashmiri name: Rata Mogul

Vernacular name: Ullu

A RESIDENT BIRD

The owl is a common bird round Srinagar. It comes out during the night and hides during the day. When it comes out during the day time, it is surrounged by the Crows which annoy it very much. It is a brown bird with narrow white and black bars. The face is almost round.

This bird which has a sagacious look, is considered inauspicious.

When an owl whoops during the night the people say that a male child is going to be born in that locality, but a sound like, "krake, krake" is believed to portend the birth of a female child.

Sometimes the claws of some unfortunate owl are decorated with gold to adorn the cap of a child, or are hung round its neck, as it is believed to avert the danger of an evil spirit.

Its flight is quite noiseless when searching for mice and other small prey.

It nests is hollow trees or in ruins and lays two white eggs.

"In the neighbourhood of Bordeaux the peasants throw a pinch of salt into the fire on hearing the birds call, to avert evil."

Swainson

"In the South of France there is an idea that if an owl shrieks on the chimney of a house in which a woman lies with child, daughter will be born to her; its cry near a village betokens a birth shortly in one of the houses, and in Berne it is believed to foretell either the birth of a child or the death of a man." —*Swainson*

"In parts of East Devon the cry of the owl is said to foretell good or bad weather according to which side of the valley it comes from. In Italy the cry is said to foretell at change if heard in bad weather, and there is a Sussex saying, 'when owls whoop much a night, expect a fair marrow.'" —*Loyd*

CHAPTER XXVII

ORDER....ACCIPITRES (THE BIRDS OF PREY)

The bill is hooked, the talons are powerful and there is bare skin at the base of the bill.

THE PANDIONIDAE FAMILY

OSPREY

Pandion haliaetus haliaetus.

A RESIDENT BIRD

The Osprey is as large as a Kite. It has a white head and neck, and a broad dark band from the eye down the side of the neck.

It generally feeds on fish. When in search of food this large bird rises up, vibrates its wings like a Pied Kingfisher, then closes its wings and drops like a stone and disappears into the water with a large splash, and comes out with a fish in its talons.

It is frequently seen on the Wular Lake and along the Jhelum river in cold weather.

CHAPMER XXVIII

GYPIDAE (THE VULTURE FAMILY)

"Vultures are huge birds of prey which feed exclusively on carrion. They are distinguished by the fact that their head and neck are destitute of feathers. A large bird of prey with a bare head and neck is undoubtedly a vulture."

—Dewar

THE HIMALAYAN GRIFFON.

Gyps Himalayensis.

Kashmiri name: Grad.

A RESJDENT BIRD.

This is a very large bird. It stays for hours floating

on out-stretched wings in the air looking for dead animals. It takes advantage of aerial currents and it is marvellous to see how it can ascend several thousand feet in a minute or so.

A number of these birds were seen at Lidderwat, Zojpal and Dras, sailing on their wings in the air near the sky- kissing peaks.

On August 16th. at Zoji Pal (11,000ft) we counted three dozen vultures eating a carcass and it was interesting to see them hopping with out-stretched wings.

At Dán Zab (11,950ft.) a vulture visited a dead pony in the morning. In half an hour 89 vultures gathered round the carcass and finished half the body of the animal by sunset. It was interesting to see them alighting with their necks lowered and basking in the sun with out-streched wings.

They breed on rocky precipices from 6,000 to 8,000 ft. nests being usually inaccessible without ropes. Two nests were obtained by Mr. Osmaston at 6,500 ft while the snow was still on the ground. They each contained one fresh egg. I saw one egg and it was like a white cricket ball.

THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE.

Neophron percnopterus percnopterus.

Kashmiri name : Patyál.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is a little larger than a kite. The whole plumage is white except the wings, which are black and brown. The bill is yellow and hooked at the end. The head and upper neck are bare, with the skin deep yellow. This bird is generally seen either flying near Shankarachar or in Malla Khah where it feasts on the carrion. When in flight it appears a graceful white bird

with a round tail.

In April two boys found a nest above the Gagribal Spur. The nest was lined with paper, sticks and felt rags. They found two eggs of a dirty white colour, marked with deep reddish brown.

CHAPTER XXIX

FALCONIDAE (BIRDS OF PREY)

PALLAS' FISHING EAGLE.

Cuncuma leucorypha.

Kashmiri name : Gáda Grad.

This bird is nearly half as big again as the kite. It is a large brown bird with whitish forehead, chin, and throat, and a broad white band across the tail, about three inches from the tip.

It is fairly common in the neighbourhood of lakes and rivers.

Mr. Osmaston found a pair at 10,600ft., in the Sind Valley and another pair the Tsomoriri Lake at 15,000 ft., in Rupshu in June.

"All fish-eagles have loud resonant calls, anything but melodious, and each and all seem to love hearing their own voices. In the plains of the Punjab it may often be heard long before it is seen, particularly when soaring, and though it may only appear a wee speck in the heavens, its call will be distinctly heard." —*C. H. Donald.*

THE BLACK-EARED KITE.

Milvus migrans lineatus.

Kashmiri name : Gónt.

Vernacular name : Chil

This is one of the most common resident birds of Srinagar. The bill is hooked and tail forked. It spends the whole of its time in flying and sailing in the air. The tail works as a rudder when turning left or right. While on the wing it looks down in search of food. When it holds its booty in its talons it passes it on to its beak when flying. It seems to love sailing through the air as long as the light lasts. When seen flying high in a flock

it is believed to be the precursor of clouds. Its perching on the house is supposed to be ominus. From February we begin to hear its mating screams on chenars, poplars and mulberry trees. The nest is a large mass of sticks, lined with wool, hair, rags and paper. It lays 2 or 3 white eggs spotted with brown.

On April 18th a boy found two eggs on a chenar tree at Padstaki Bagh. With the eggs was a knife. I was told that the young ones cannot see until their eyes are rubbed with a jewel or a piece of metal.

THE KESTREL

Falco tinnunculus.

Kashmiri name—Böhar

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is rather larger than a myna. The head, neck and tail are grey, back and wings brick red. Lower plumage rufous-fawn with the breast and flanks streaked and spotted with brown.

The bill is short and hooked. The wings are long, pointed and thin, tail long, the legs orange yellow.

It is bird of the open country and prefers mountain slopes above tree belts, where it finds lizards, grasshoppers and mice.

It is pleasing to watch the bird making circles in the air and suddenly stopping and hovering to detect its prey and dropping on it like a stone, not unlike the piedking-fisher. On account of its hoverihg motion it is sometimes called windhover in England.

It breds on rocky cliffs. We have seen several on Kolahoi and Apharwat, Erin Valley and Konsar Nág slopes and Chets Kôin.

CHAPTER XXX

ORDER—COLUMBAE

FAMILY COLUMBIDAE (DOVE FAMILY)

THE TURTLE DOVE.

Streptopelia orientalis meena.

Kashmiri name—Wan Kukil

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

It is about the size of a Ring-dove. In colour it is a vinous-brown bird with conspicuous rufous scale markings on the wings, and a patch of black and blue grey scale markings on the sides of the neck. The dark tail edged with white is conspicuous in flight. The iris is orange, the legs vinous red, the claws black.

It is a bird of well-wooded areas on the slopes of mountains. We saw large numbers among the forest of the Tragbal Pass. They are also found in the Suru and Dras Valleys.

The breeding season is from May to August, and nests are built in small trees or thick bushes. The clutch consists of two eggs.

THD RING-DOVE

Streptopelia decaocto decaocto.

Kashmiri name.—Kukil.

Vernacular name: Fakhta.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is a little larger than a Myna. The over-coverts are pale grey with a plain black collar round the base of the neck.

Its call *Gu-Gu-Guh* either from leafy chenars or willow groves at once warns of its arrival in late March. The bird is seen in large numbers eating seeds in the open

country fields.

Kukila Hyot (dove's throat) or Kukil Hish (dove like) are proverbial phrases used of sweet singing or graceful appearance.

"The dove is much revered in Roman Catholic countries, and in Italy, Germany, and Russia it is considered a sin to eat it, while in Bohemia it is looked upon as the special favourite of God and never killed". —*Swainson.*

They breed in May and June. The nest is generally placed in willows and chenárs not far from the ground.

The clutch consists of 2 eggs. They are broad and perfect ovals, hard in texture and somewhat glossy. The colour is white.

Eggs measure 30·2×23·4 mm.

CHAPTER XXXI

ORDER—GALLINAE
FAMILY PHASIANIDAE
(THE CHIKOR FAMILY)

Alectoris graeca chukar

Kashmiri name: Kakov

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This bird is a little larger than a Crow. It is well-known to sportsmen. The upper parts of the bird are ashy brown. It has a black band across the forehead through each eye which is continued behind the eye and round the throat as a gorget; the sides are heavily barred with black and chestnut.

Iris orange, bill and legs red, the claws brown.

It is fairly common on the lower slopes of the hills bordering on the main valley, and found up to at least 11,000 ft. In autumn we hear their call from Zeethair and Shankarāchār slopes. The call is "*Kak, Kak, Kakak, Kakak*". It is sometimes kept in cages as a pet. When pursued, they fly fast and have alternate flight and glide, hence the proverb 'Kakau ring'. (A short flight).

Mr. Jesse mentions that a gentleman who was watching his ploughman saw a partridge running from her nest, almost crushed by the horses' hoofs. Being certain that the next furrow must bury the eggs and nest, he watched for the return of the plough, when to his great astonishment the nest previously containing 21 eggs was vacant. After a search he found the bird sitting upon the eggs under a hedge, nearly 40 yards from the nest, to which place she and her mate had removed the whole number in less than 20 minutes.

It is a game bird and affords excellent shooting from October till March.

Breeding commences early in April. The clutch consists of 12 or 13 eggs, usually laid under a rock or a bush. The ground colour is pale yellowish or greyish stone, with spots.

Eggs measure 42·1×307· mm.

THE MONAL

Lophophorus impejanus

Kashmiri name: Male-Sonul, Sona Chichur
Female, Hám

The Monal is much larger than a kite. It has a gorgeous plumage and a brillant crest. The graceful metallic green, copper and bronze clothe the cock bird's upper plumage. When on wing, a white patch in the middle of the black and the chestnut of the short broad tail is conspicuous.

The hen has a mottled brown plumage. "Iris brown; naked eye patch blue; bill dark horny brown; legs yellowish or brownish green, claws dark horny brown. Wieght 5½ lb, female 9 to 5 lb., bill stout and slightly curved, wings and tail slightly rounded, the male has a marked tuft of long spatulate feathers on the top of the head, the most brillantly metalled plumage imaginable and heavy blunt spurs on the legs."

It is found from Afghanistán to Chitral and thence to Bhutan between 10.000 ft. to 12,000 ft.

It prefers to be in the dense forests, sometimes on the ferny covered slopes of mountain in Kishen Ganga and Wardwon Valleys. While going up the Dud Gai mountain in the Kishen Ganga Valley over the densely covered ferns, a pair of these birds flew away towards the otherside of the glen. It likes the unfrequented parts of the mountain above 10,000 ft.

In winter it comes down into villages which are

situated at the foot of mountains. The villagers catch them and kill them for the table. It is considered dainty.

It feeds on bulbous roots and grubs, while in captivity it lives on wheat. Like the cock-sparrow it gives a nuptial dance to the female.

"He begins by bending down his head and expanding turquoise eye patch; then he sets out his wings without fully expanding them, and raises and spreads his tail, thus showing all his top colour at once. When thus at full show he parades with mincing gait round the hen, now and then hopping in a way strangely out of place for so heavy and dignified a bird." —*Finn.*

The nest is a hallow scratched in the rock, usually covered with dry leaves or moss.

The clutch consists of 4 or 5 eggs of white ground-colour with reddish brown spots.

CHAPTER XXXII

ORDER—GRALLAE

FAMILY RALLIDAE (THE MOORHEN FAMILY)

THE MOORHEN

Gallinula chloropus parvifrons

Kashmiri name: Tech

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

The Moorhen is a common bird found in the Dal and Anchár Lakes, upper plumage is dark-brown and the under-parts dark-grey.

Iris red, frontal shield and base of bill red, tip greenish yellow, legs green with an orange ring above the joint. The toes are fringed with a membrane and are exceedingly long.

It is found throughout India, in the plains and in the Himaláyas and Nilgiris up to about 6,000 ft.

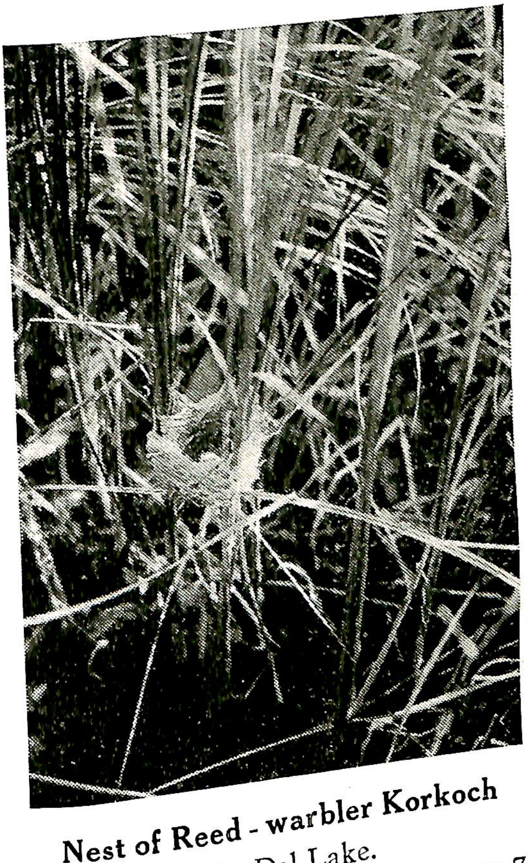
It is a water-bird, and spends all its time swimming. It feeds on vegetable matter and water insects and their eggs. It is a strong diver; to escape it dives and comes up a good distance from the intruder. The submarine vegetation does not hinder its speed. When swimming it puts its head forward, and erects its tail. It takes long strides when it walks on land.

The nest is composed of a heap of vegetable matter with a depression for the eggs, either in bulrushes or among aquatic plants.

Breeding commences in May to July, 8 or 9 eggs are commonly laid, but 14 have been recorded. The ground colour of the egg is a pale stonecolour tinged pink.

It has deep red spots.

They measure 41·4×29·6 mm.



Nest of Reed - warbler Korkoch
The Dal Lake.
To face page 74

THE PURPLE COOT

Porphyrio pollocephalus pollocephalus

Kashmiri name: Wan Tech

A WINTER MIGRANT

It is a beautiful bird. The upper parts are purple blue, with very long red legs. The bill is conical and red, as is a square shield which the bird carries on its forehead. During winter a large number of these birds visited the valley in 1929, 30 and 31.

It is a pity that these beautiful birds are shot for the table in the valley. It would have been a gracious act to forbid such slaughter.

THE COMMON COOT

Fulica atra atra

Kashmiri name: Kolar, Káv-put

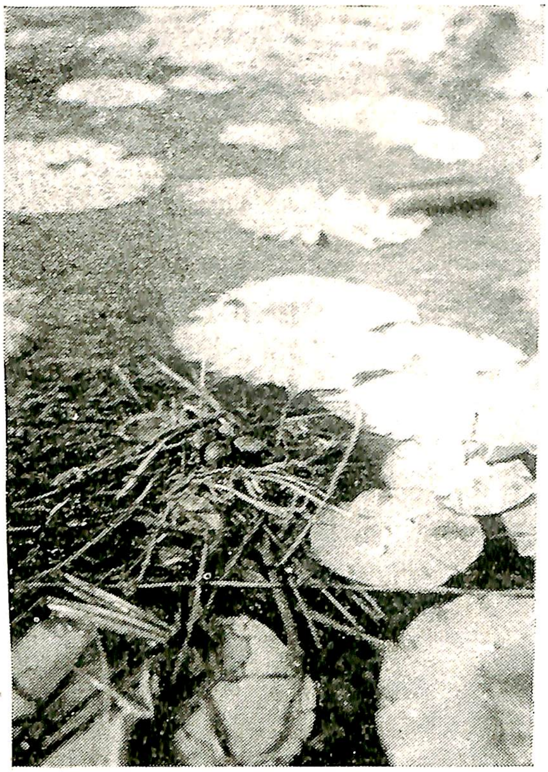
This bird is slightly larger than a Crow. It has a shinning black plumage with bluish white bill and frontal shield. Iris red, legs greenish.

The Coot is found throughout the greater part of Europe, Northern Africa and Asia. It is unknown in Ceylon.

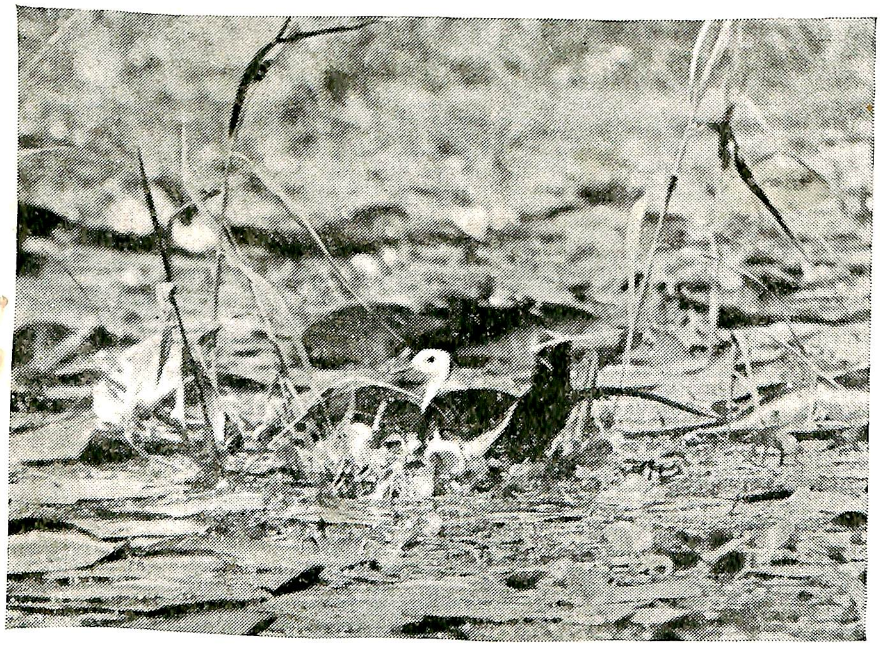
In winter Coots collect in large flocks in Hokar Sar and in other lakes but not in the Dal Lake. "On the Munchur Lake, the water is covered with separate flocks of coot, each of which keeps more or less to a territory of its own separated by a gap of several hundred yards from the territory of the next. The noise of wings and paddling feet when one of these gatherings takes to flight is like the noise of great waves breaking on a shingle beach. For the Coot rises with difficulty, pattering at first along the surface of the waters, though once on the wing it flies strongly with neck and legs out-streched and rises well up into the air".

—*Whistler*

Their food consists of vegetable matter, small fish, water insects and eggs and chicks of other water birds. The nest consists of a mass of water-plants among the rushes. The ground colour is a pale buffy-stone with black and dark brown spots. They measure $52{\cdot}4 \times 35{\cdot}0$ mm.



Nest of Pheasant - tailed Jacana
Anchar Sar



The Pheasant - tailed Jacana
Goind Kav

To face page 77

CHAPTER XXXIII

ORDER——LIMICOLAE

FAMILY JACANIDAE (THE WATER PHEASANT FAMILY)

THE PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA

Hydrophasianus chirurgus

Kashmiri names: Goind Kāv, Gair Kov.

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is seen walking on lotus and other aquatic leaves. It has a long central tail feather. When flying the whiteness of its wings gives a beautiful effect. It has long claws and very long toes, which enable it to walk over the water leaves.

The bird has a wide distribution. It is found in India, Ceylon, Burma and eastward as far as China, Philippines and Java.

In Kashmir we see the Jacana or Water-Pheasant in the Dal Lake towards the Nasim and Nishat Bagh side, Anchar Lake, Hokar Sar, and Pádsháhi Bágh swamps.

Its long tail feather as well as those of Herons is plucked and sold to make a crest for bridegrooms to wear on their heads. Its call is loud and somewhat like "*gooruk*". It feeds on fresh water molluscs and vegetable matter. The breeding season is June. Four eggs, peg-top shaped, are laid in a heap of accumulated floating water plants. The eggs are of dark olive brown colour. They measure 37·2×27·8 mm.

THF RINGED PLOVER

FAMILY CHARADRIIDAE (PLOVER FAMILY)

Charadrius dubius gerdoni

Kashmiri name: Kola Katij

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This graceful little bird is comparatively larger than

a bulbul with longer legs. The black bar encircles its neck and breast. An other black band passes over forehead, ears and eyes. Between these two black bars is a white band round its upper neck. The upper parts are brown and lower plumage white.

Iris dark browh; eyerim yellow, bill black, yellow at base; legs yellow, claws black.

"The head and eyes are rather large, the wing is pointed and long, there is no hind too".

This species is spread throughout Europe, Northern Asia and Africa It is also in the islands of the East Indies.

The bird has been observed on the banks of the Sind river near Ganderbal. On the sandy and shingly surface it finds flies and insects for its food. It beautifully takes short runs and walks nimbly here and there. On the approach of an intruder it takes to wing; its brown parts mixing with the protective colouring of the surroundings, it at once gets out of sight.

The clutch consists of four eggs laid in a slight depression of a sand or shingly bed of a stream. The eggs are drab or pale khaki in ground colour, finely speckled with very dark brown. They measure 28·9 × 21·6 mm.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE COMMON SANDPIPER

Tringa Hypoleuca

Kashmiri name: Tont Kôn, Kula Kavin

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This Sandpiper is rather smaller than a Myna. The upper plumage is dark brown and the under parts white. The bill is long, straight and slender, the front toes are slightly webbed.

It breeds from the Arctic circle to the Mediterranean basin in Europe and in Asia north of the Himaláyas, eastward to Japan. In winter it migrates southward to Africa, Southern India, Australia and Tasmania. Several, pairs are to be seen in the Dal Lake and the Jhelum.

It is a graceful little bird with slender legs, often seen running along the sandy banks of mountain streams in summer. We have observed it in Suru, Gurais, Lidderwat and Madhamati valleys. When disturbed it flies away skimming the surface of the water and emitting a shrill note. It wags its short white tail up and down.

The food consists of water insects and their eggs. Eggs are laid in May and June in a nest composed of dry leaves and grass in a depression under a bush. The clutch consists of four eggs of creamy white colour spotted chiefly at the broad end with reddish brown and sepia markings. They measure $35{\cdot}5 \times 26{\cdot}0$ mm.

THE IBIS-BILL

Ibidorkynchus struthersi

Kashmiri name: Kanyul

The Ibis-bill is a rare bird of the Sind and the Lidder valleys. It is comparatively larger than a House Crow, with a red curved beak and semi-circular black bar

on its breast. It haunts the pebble strewn islets of mountain torrents covered with Lythrum salicaria (saman thör).

Col. B. T. Phillips describes the bird as follows:- "The Ibis-bill is readily recognisable by its three-inch-long, deep-red, curved bill and its overall length of fifteen inches. Its white underplumage beneath a broad black gorget so conspicuous during flight, all but disappears the moment the bird alights to become transformed into a bluish grey object tinged with rufous conforming exactly with the general tone of its shingle haunts. The nesting sight is usually entirely devoid of cover and is placed on the crest of a ridge of shingle dividing the main stream of a torrent from its subsidiary over-flows, thereby rendering it safe from overflooding by the daily rise of the water level as the snows melt in the sun.

The nest is a mere scrape in the ground, though it is neatly lined with smooth pebbles by the birds themselves. The colour of the eggs—3 or 4 to a clutch—so resembles the shingle on which they are laid, that careful approach is essential".

Mr. Osmaston found the bird in the Ladak side of the Himaláyas in the Suru Valley from 9,000 ft.to 12,000 ft. It breeds in April

CHAPTER XXXV

ORDER——GAVIAE

FAMILY LARDIAE (THE TERN FAMILY)

THE WHISKERED TERN

Chlidonias leucopareia indica

Kashmiri name: Kreu

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Whiskered Tern is a whitish bird with the top and the sides of the head black and under parts sooty black. Bill and legs red. In winter it may be found in Ceylon and Burma.

These birds are seen flying across lakes, swamps and rice fields from one side to another. At times they dip to catch their prey. It feeds on dragon flies, water beetles and insects.

On July 8 we got inside the swamp to the south of Pádsháhi Bágh. We found no less than 25 nests. We did not see more than three eggs in any nest. The pitv is that grass cutters steal their eggs to sell to the people in the city. As we approached the nest, the bird made a hideous noise and even tried to swoop down and peck us. They made several gestures and the noise was great. The nest is like a floating islet composed of water plants with a depression at the top. The ground colour of the eggs is yellowish brown or pale green, marked chiefly in a zone at the large end with deep brown chocolate spots. They measure 37·0×27·4 mm.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ORDER——HERODIONES

FAMILY ARDEIDAE (THE HERON FAMILY)

THE COMMON HERON.

Ardea cinerea cinerea.

Kashmiri name: Brag.

The upper plumage of this bird is ashy grey, the flight feathers bluish black, the long breast plumes white, the lower plumage white. The iris is golden yellow. It is long, compressed and pointed; the tail short.

It is found in the greater part of Europe, Asia and Africa and extends through West and Central Asia into India, Ceylon and Burma.

"The flight of the Heron is very majestic and characteristic, and when travelling the bird mounts high in the air and is recognisable a long way off. The head is drawn back within the shoulders and the long legs tail behind while the large rounded wings beat with a slow methodical rhythm. The call is a loud harsh "*frank*" usually uttered in flight. The bird is partly nocturnal in its habits."

—*Whistler*.

It stands motionless at the edge of the water to watch for a fish or a frog. This position has given rise to an idiom "*Braga Smad* (Heron's trance)".

There are regular colonies of these birds at Bandapor, Vetsar Nág and Kulgám. On a July night in Bandapor we had no sleep owing to the deafening noise of these birds. On the top of the huge chenárs their long necks appear like so many serpents swaying to and fro. They nest on these trees.

THE POND HERON

Ardeola grayi

Kashmiri name: Bögla

A RESIDENT BIRD

The Pond Heron is comparatively larger than a Crow. The head and neck are brown, chin and throat white, wings and abdomen White. When on its wings it altogether appears a white bird.

"Iris bright yellow, eyelids greenish yellow, bill bluish at the base, yellewish about the middle, black at the tip, legs green."

It is found on all lakes, but is very common at Anchár lake. It has a wide range from the Persian Gulf it extends to India, Ceylon, Burma, and Malaya Peninsula.

It is not easy to find owing to its dull colour, matching with the vegetation when it stands motionless; its neck shrunk between its shoulders, watching quietly along the edge of a floating garden on an islet in the lake. It walks sluggishly to find its prey and like an arrow darts with its long pointed beak and stretched neck at a frog or a small fish which comes in its hold. It is also found round the paddy fields, hence paddy bird.

The breeding season is May. It nests among willows in Anchár Lake. The clutch consists of four or five eggs of blue colour. It measures 38·0 × 27·9 m m.

THE NIGHT HERON.

Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax

Kashmiri name: Bör.

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This bird is slightly smaller than a Kite. The overcoverts are black glossed with green, and long white feathers

hang from the crest; the under-parts are whitc

The iris is red, the skin is bare from the eyes to the beak and is yellowish green, the bill is black and yellowish at the base, the feet greenish yellow. The neck is short and thick.

It is found in South and Central Europe, nearly the whole of Africa and in the greater part of Asia.

They spend their time sitting on the top of chenárs, and as soon as the sun sets they are seen flying in lines, flapping their wings regularly, emitting "*wak wak*" and flying past Shankaráchár to feed on fish or water insects in some pond or lake. There is a regular colony of thes birds at Hazrat Bal. They lay 4 eggs of light green colour. These measure 49·5×34·8 mm.

THE LITTLE BITTERN

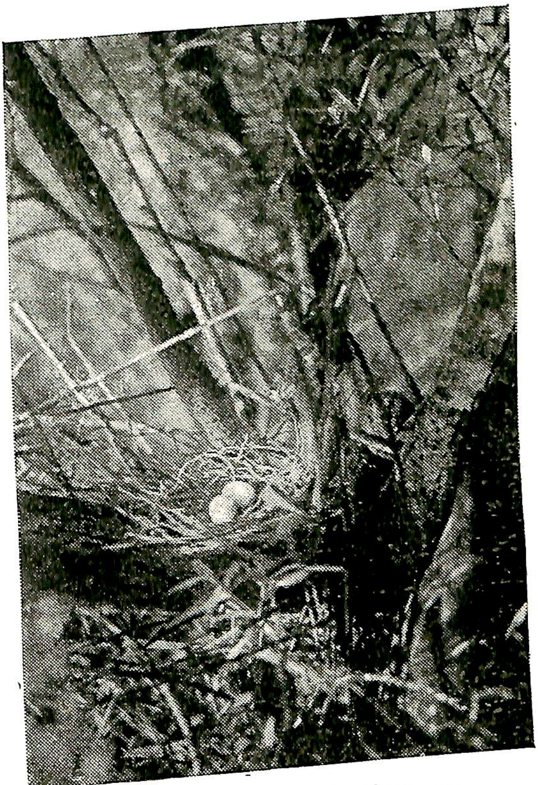
Ixobrychus minutus minutus.

Kashmiri name: Goi

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This is a very common bird seen among the bulrushes on the Dal Lake. One sees it watching its prey—a frog or fish, standing motionless with long beak and legs. Sometimes it climbs willow trees and sits on the branches. It has a yellowish brown body with black and white wings and a black back.

It is seen in the last week of April. Breeding commences in May and from 5 to 7 dull white eggs are laid in a nest of leaves in a bulrush bed. The eggs are slightly elliptical in shape. They measure 34·5×25·5 mm.



Nest of the Little Bittern

Goi.

To face page 84

CHAPTER XXXVII

ORDER——ANSERS-DUCKS
FAMILR ANATIDAE

The bill is rather long and broad and the claws webbed. "The changes of plumage, through which most of the ducks pass are very curious and there are at least six of these. After the young have acquired their first plumage, both sexes resemble the old female. In the first year they are like the adults. but differ somewhat from both, then the male has a separate plumage from the female in the fully adult stage, and lastly there is the post nuptial dress of the male, when he retires into a sober-coloured plumage like that of his wife." —*R. B. Sharpe.*

The wild ducks (Pachin) begin to migrate in November. All through the winter in snow storms and rain they are heard and sometimes seen, flying at dusk in lines and curves headed by a pilot, towards the east to feed in lakes and swamps, and at dawn about 6-30 a. m. they come back from their feeding grounds to Hokar-Sar or some other swamps. By the flapping of their wings and a kind of creaking noise we can detect their flight. They are always punctual.

G. Stagdzing of Hemis Monastery (Ladakh) told me of a (wild duck) Swan which has such a peculiar construction of the beak that if you offer it milk mixed with water, it will drink only the milk and leave the water.

One wonders why Dr. Sven Heidin does not mention these mystic birds, for he Launched his boat in Mansurowar Lake at the foot of Kailás Koh, where the head Lama told me these water fowls are found.

THE BRAHMANY DUCK
OR
The Ruddy Sheldrake.
Casarca ferruginea.

Kashmiri name: Tsákao.

The bird is recognisable by its orange-brown plumage and by black colour round its neck. It has a black tail and lower abdomen chestnut. The female is dull in colour and has no black colour.

Iris dark brown; bill and legs black. It breeds in southern and eastern Siberia, Mongolia and Mediterranean area and winters in Northern Africa, and China.

It arrives here in late October and leaves in April.

It visits the fresh-water sheets and feeds at night. At sundown the flocks fly towards some fresh-water lakes to feed and at dawn they are heard returning to their favourite haunts.

They have been recorded breeding in the Eastern Ladák in the crevices of cliffs. The ducklings are brought down to water by the parent birds as soon as they are hatched.

The clutch consists of 8 eggs of creamy-white colour. In Scotland, when Wild geese are seen flying north before the breeding season, fair settled weather is expected, and boys, when they see any on the wing cry at the top of their voices:

Here's a string o' wild geese,
How many for a penny?
Are to my Lord,
And are to my Lady,
Up the gate and down the gate,
They're a' flown frae me.

—*Chambers*

A Morayshire rhyme runs:

"Wild geese, wild geese, ganging to the sea,
Good weather it will be:
Wild geese, wild geese, ganging to the hill,
The weather it will spill."

THE MALLARD

Anas platyrhyncha platyrhyncha.

Kashmiri name: Male, Neluj./ Female, Thuj.

A WINTER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a domestic Duck. The male has a deep green head and neck with white collar, back brown. the shoulders grey, the breast deep chestnut, the under parts freckled greyish white, the tail black, the wings have a patch of bright greenish blue edged with black and white.

The female is brown with black markings. The iris is brown, the bill greenish yellow, the legs orange red. It breeds throughout the Northern Hemisphere and in winter is found southward to Northern Africa, Madeira. the Canaries and Northern India. Several pairs breed here. In winter they are seen in flocks in Hokar and other *sars*. The breeding season is between April and May. The nest is built in reeds and about 12 eggs are laid, of a very pale greenish colour. They measure 56·3×41·3mm

THE SHOVELLER

Spatula clypeata

Kashmiri name: Hañk.

The bird can easily be recognised by its shovel like bill, green head and neck, white breast, a blue patch in its wings and abdomen chestnut.

Iris yellow, brown in the female. bill black in the adult male; dark brown with the lower mandible dull orange in female and young males; legs orange-red.

It is distributed throughout Europe, Northern Asia and North America and in winter it is found in India, Egypt Equatorial Africa, China and Japan.

It visits the valley in late November and leaves for its breeding haunts in early April. It is found in Hokar Sar and other marshy places. Its bill is furnished with comb-like teeth to enable the bird to sieve the mud for the purpose of separating aquatic insects and seed from muddy water. Shopkeepers sell them in the city for table.

The nest is made of soft reed and rushes in marshy places. The cultch consists of 8 or 9 eggs, but 16 have been recorded. The colour is yellowish grey with either a green or creamy tinge.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ORDER—PYGOPODES

FAMILY PODICIPIDAE (THE GREBE FAMILY)

THE DABCHICK

Podiceps ruficollis albipennis

Kashmiri name: Pind

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This is the smallest of the water birds seen swimming in Dal and Anchar lakes. The upper parts are dark brown. with sides of the head, neck, and throat chestnut, the under parts white.

"It rises from the water with some diffculty owing to the comparatively small size of its wings, but once in the air travels well and fast. On settling it strikes the water with the breast which is well cushioned with fat, down and feathers instead of thrusting forward its feet as a brake after the fashion of Ducks and Geese." —*Whistler*.

It is a strong swimmer and diver. If alarmed it dives quickly, coming up again some yards away when, if it thinks there is still danger, it again disappears under water. Eggs are laid from May to July in a nest of decayed floating vegetable matter in a reedy bed. The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs. The eggs are of creamy white colour pointed at both ends. When parents leave the nest they conceal the eggs with a part of the nest material.

The eggs measure $36{\cdot}6 \times 25{\cdot}1$ mm.

Morning and evening song of birds.

The following observations of the serial succession of bird song at dawn and at dusk were taken on May 16 in accordance with the World Watchers' Movement organised by Mr. Noble Rollin of Glanton.

These were recorded in Mr. E. D. Tyndale-Biscoe's garden which is a natural bird sanctuary. Here we find large and small trees, open spaces and lawn side by side. Sometimes we meet with rare specimens during spring and autumn migrations.

It was a blissful hour when my friend and I were surrounded by this heavenly music. The soul gets filled and thoughts are turned towards the Creator of the universe.

4 10 a. m.	Soft calls of Tickell's Thrush (Turdus unicolor).
4. 15 a. m.	Tickells Thrush began its song.
4. 16 a. m.	The Golden Oriole (Oriolus oriolus kundoo) followed.
4. 17 a. m.	The second Tickell's Thrush joined in.
4. 19 a. m.	The second Golden Oriole took part.
4. 23 a. m.	(A lull)
4. 24 a. m	Tickell's Thrush and Golden Oriole began again.
4. 30 a. m.	Another Thrush from a different quarter joined the concert. Then we heard the Paradise Flycatcher (Terpsiphone paradise leucogaster). This bird does not continue its song but repeats twice or thrice and then stops. The note goes somewhat as follows:—'Were you you here? or it may be, 'Chich chichu chich'.
4. 31 a m.	The third Tickell's Thrush.
4. 33 a. m.	The Ringdove (Streptopelia decaoeto decaoeto) from the eastern side.
4 44 a. m.	Another Ringdove from the south.
4. 45 a. m	Another Ringdove from the north.
4. 46 a. m.	All Ringdoves together. Chorus in full swing. The Paradise Flycatcher.
4. 47 a. m.	The House Crow (Corvus splendens zigmayeri).
4 48 a. m.	The Ringdove.
4. 58 a. m.	Ringdoves, Orioles, Thrushes at high pitch
5. 00 a- m.	The Crow, the House Sparrow, (Passer domesticus parkini), the Starling (Sturnus vulgaris humii), the Myna (Aridotheres tristis tristis).

5. 7 a. m.	The Bulbul (Molpastes leucogenys leucogenys).
5. 10 a. m.	Ringdoves in chorus.
5. 12 a. m.	A Thrush was seen feeding on the ground.
5. 13 a. m.	The Tit (Parus major kaschmitiensis). The note resembles the creaking sound of a spinning wheel.
5. 20 a. m.	Ringdoves, Tits, Bulbuls continue.
5. 21 a. m.	The Hoopoe (Upapa epops epops).
5. 22 a. m.	The Rufous-backed Shrike (Lanius schach erythronotus). This bird is a great micmic, but apparently it does not sing in the morning. It lies in wait to kill others.
5. 24 a. m.	The Jackdaw (Corvus monedula monedula).
5. 30 a. m.	Orioles and Thrushes stopped. Ringdoves and tits continuing.
5. 33 a. m.	The Kite (Milvus migrans lineatus) gave two screams only.
5. 45 a. m.	Doves, Bulbuls, the Hoopoe, the Myna continuing. Morning cloudy.
	Sunrise about 6–10 a. m.
	In day time Doves, Orioles, Thrushes continue their songs in a cool place occasionally.
	Sunset about 7–10 p m.
7. 14 p. m.	Myna, the Bulbul and the Golden Oriole
7. 15 p. m.	The Thrush.
7. 20 p. m.	'Tuck, Tuck' calls of several Thrushes.
7. 25 p. m.	Thrush, Ringdove, Golden Oriole and the scream of a Kite.
7. 35 p. m.	Ringdove and Thrush again.
7. 45 p. m.	Various calls of Thrushes.
7. 50 p. m.	Silence prevails after the hard day's struggle for food for their dependents, they merit perfect sleep.

Migration of birds

In May our souls are elevated by the celesial song of Thrushes, Orioles and Ringdoves, while in winter our swamps and lakes are full of wildfowl.

Where do these birds come from?

In summer birds come to us from tropical and sub-tropical regions and in winter they come from Northern regions. The regularity with which the birds come and go gives an added charm to the study of migration.

"A bird that moves north in the summer to breed, by doing so continues to live at the temperature to which it is suited. A bird that breeds in the high arctic has a fairly rich insect life newly released by the retreating snow on which to feed its nestlings, and it has twenty-fours hours of daylight in which to catch these insects. In the tropics birds move in an ordinary migration to breed, not necessarily in cooler or lighter parts of the world, but in parts where the fruitful wet season persists and where the barren dry season can be avoided.

By migrating, many birds must find, not only a climate more suited to them, but also a place to find their nests. For the distribution of birds depends to a suprisingly large extent on the availability of nest sites". —*James Fisher*

The aim of migration appears to be threefold.

(a) Reproduction.

The vernal breeze rouses in birds an impulse which urges them to retire to a secluded spot to reproduce and rear their young. They regularly return to the same spot every year. They do so in flocks. We often see here how jackdaws assemble in hundreds to feed in marshes or to roost on trees; we find too that Sparrows, Goldfinches and Crested tits feed in flocks on trees. Sometimes young of the first brood join together and feed together. We saw a flock of young Plumbeous redstarts feed on the bank of the Kaigil River. It is hence that they migrate in companies from tropics towards the north. It is like the well-organised march of an army. The ducks fly in lines and V shaped formation headed by a pilot—an old bird. The moves are closely dependant on weather conditions.

(b) Food is also one of the needs which urges birds to move down. As the cold weather sets in and fruits, berries and seeds become scarce, insects are no longer seen; the birds then migrate south. The insectivorous varieties move farther than those which live on seeds.

(c) I wonder, whether severe cold in some species is responsi-

ble for change in their breeding grounds. As the mountain ranges round our valley become wrapped up in snow, the birds migrate to the valley.

When birds acquire new plumage after moulting they find themselves ready for the journey. The old birds lead the way either alone or along with the young. Some fly by day, some by night, and others by both day and night.

On Bird Migration Mr. William Brewster writes:

"Timid, sedentary, or feebled-winged birds migrate by night, because they are either afraid to venture on long, exposed journeys by daylight, or unable to continue their journey day after day without losing much time in stopping to search for their food. Such as. Wrens and Warblers.

"Bold, restless, strong-winged birds, migrate chiefly, or very freely, by day, because, being accustomed to search their food in open situations, they are indifferent to concealment, and being further able to accomplish long distances rapidly and with slight fatigue, they can ordinarily spare sufficient time by the way for brief stops in places where they can get food; such as Larks, Thrushes.

Birds of easy, tireless wing, which habitually feed in the air migrate exclusively by day, because, being able either to obtain the usual supply of food as they fly, or to accomplish the long journeys so rapidly that they do not feed on the way; such as, Swallows, Hawks and Terns".

Birds fly at a great height while migrating and follow mountain chains, coast lines, and particularly river valleys. Storms make them fly low.

Some birds migrate from low land to high lands as Black Bulbuls and Laughing Thrushes, some from inland areas to adjacent sea-coasts, some from one region to another.

It is said that in spring migration in some species males arrive first and in autumn migration young birds leave earlier than adults. If weather conditions at the beginning are favourable, the disturbance on the way may stop and delay their arrival, but in unfavourable weather conditions they do not leave the place. Fog is serious hinderance to migration, they loose direction, loose way and cause delay.

Some are of opinion that birds have no conscious knowledge of this movement. This inborn instinct is transmuted in them by inheritance.

It is worth while to keep a record of spring and winter migrants.

About 1890 the ringing system was adopted by some of the

famous bird societies. In Britian, according to Mr James Fisher, 50,000 birds are ringed annually. Out of that number half are nestlings. The name of the place and date are given on the almunium ring.

Some of the birds travel long distances while migrating.

The Golden Oriole (Posh-i-nul) comes to us from South Africa (Natal, Transvaal) where its winter quarters are.

The Bee-eater (Makhi mar) winters in Cape Colony, passing through Egypt and the Makran coast, the Indus Valley enters the Jhelum Valley.

A glance on the map of the world will convey to us an idea of the distance travelled by these wonders of Nature.

The Paradise Flycatcher comes from Java.

The American Warbler breeds in Labrador and winters in South Brazil.

The Golden Plover flies 2,500 miles from Nova Scotia to South America. There is a specimen in the Pratap Museum. I wonder whether the bird was procured in Kashmir Valley or brought from Europe.

The Arctic Tern breeds in the Arctic Circle 70°N, and when the young are fully grown, flies back to the Antarctic Circle where the sun does not go below the horizon. It travels 11,000 miles, speed a mile to 300 miles a day.

The Wigeon Duck (Shirini Budan) was ringed in Manchur Lake (Sind) on June 25th 1929 and was found in Tobolisk (Siberia) after 246 days, 2,300 miles north of the place of ringing.

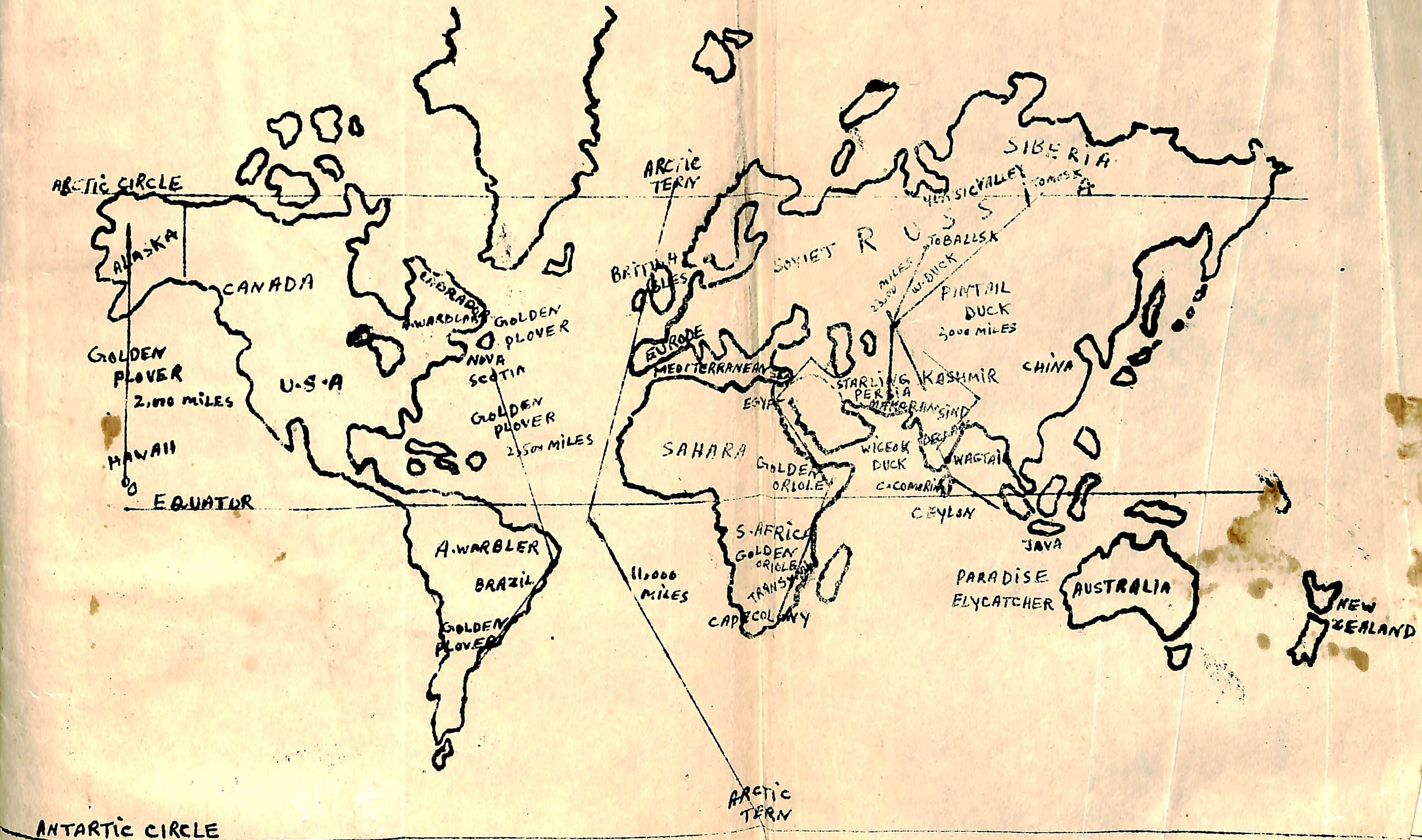
Another Duck was ringed on March 8th, 1929, and was recovered in Anchar Lake (Kashmir) on January, 7 1930 after 11 months.

A Pintail Duck (Sokha Pachen) was ringed in Tomask (Siberia) and was recovered dead in a shop of a grocer by Col. Phillips after 17 days. Distance about 2,000 miles.

13 Mallards (Neluj) were ringed by Col. Sheriff at Kashgar. All these Ducks were recovered at Kashgar or round about, there, within 10 days from the date of ringing, owing to the excessive cold condition, when the temperature fell below zero, the Ducks had become so weak that they could not fly and a great number fell an easy prey to dogs, hawks and gun.

INDEX

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MAP OF THE WORLD
Migration Chart

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